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62nd year of publication

Paraguay has chosen a former priest as its new president

Harry der Nederlanden

Rev. Samuel Kobia, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, was among the first to congratulate Fernando Lugo, a former priest, on his victory in Paraguay's presidential election held at the end of April.

Kobia said, "We have been moved by your statements, both during the election campaign and after being elected, that reflect the rich tradition of a Latin American Christianity that has struggled to follow Jesus amidst a reality marked by inequality and injustice.

"Your commitment to the poorest and most excluded in Paraguay, especially peasants and indigenous people, has laid a foundation that under your presidency, the whole of the Paraguayan people will be able to build a society that reduces the gap between rich and poor and addresses corruption with honesty and transparency."

I wonder whether a Christian candidate who is inclined to more conservative politics would receive such a heartfelt endorsement from the WCC.

But Lugo deserves congratulations, for he has succeeded in unseating a corrupt right-wing government – the Colorado Party – which has ruled Paraguay for the last 61 years.

Lugo resigned his position as bishop of the town of San Pedro, where he was called the bishop of the poor, to enter politics. He was inspired to do so by the liberation theology that captured the imaginations of many priest in the 1960s, but which was condemned by the Vatican for its Marxist roots. So Lugo is a complete novice in the political arena, all his previous



Paraguay's Fernando Lugo campaigning

experience being among politicians and bureaucrats within the church. but at every level of society.

Upon resigning from his post in the church, Lugo said, "From today on, my cathedral will be the nation."

His lack of political background, said commentators, was not seen as a drawback by the voters but as a good thing, for they are sick of political corruption. One of Lugo's primary campaign promises was to fight corruption, which has become endemic in the country, not just

However, all the candidates, including the candidate from the Colorado Party, promised to fight corruption, but the voters believed that the former priest was more likely to carry through on his promise.

Lugo also promised to renegotiate deals made long ago with Brazil and Argentina on the price of energy produced by huge hydroelectric dams co-owned by Paraguay. The treaties were drawn up at a time when Paraguay was ruled by what was virtually a dictatorship. As a result, Brazil and Argentina have been purchasing electrical energy at well below market rates.

See Paraguay on page 3

Bolivia's regions voting for autonomy from Morales' socialist policies

Harry der Nederlanden

On May 4, the largest and most prosperous province in Bolivia, Santa Cruz, held a referendum that proposes a level of autonomy for the province. It passed with an 86 percent majority. However, many of Morales supporters may have boycotted the referendum.

There were violent clashes between Morales supporters and his opponents leading up to the polls. Here and there Morales supporters attacked and destroyed polling stations.

President Evo Morales has been following in the footsteps of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez in an attempt to impose a socialist autocracy on the country. His attempt to force through a radically

revised constitution that would extend his powers failed, partly through the activism of students who condemned his plan as undemocratic. Morales invariably accuses his opponents of seeking to protect their privileged position in a society with a huge gap between rich and poor.

Three other regions have scheduled similar referendums. Congress, however, has declared the referendums illegal. But when that decision was made, a pro-Morales mob prevented opposition



President Evo Morales

representatives from entering the building. The vote for autonomy may be

difficult to convert into practical policy. Santa Cruz wants its own state legislature (a feature of most democracies) and its own police force, but it also wants the freedom to reject Morales economic policies which are hurting them.

All the referendum provinces also want to keep a larger share of natural gas and other resource revenues and exercise more control over land redistribution.

Most of Bolivia's native population lives in the western part of the country, which has always been very poor. The eastern part, which includes the referendum provinces, inhabited by people of mixed race and European ancestry, is much more prosperous.

News

White Zimbabweans bring change to Nigeria

Farmers kicked off their land by President Robert Mugabe have made new lives – and raised the local standard of living – in Nigeria.

Sarah Simpson

Shonga, Nigeria – Musa Mogadi says he is better off since “the whites” came. He’s got a new job, learned new farming skills, and he can chat on a mobile phone while zipping around the countryside on a motorbike.

Three years ago, Mr. Mogadi got by as a subsistence farmer. But he now earns a regular wage as a supervisor on one of this town’s new commercial farms.

He’s applied skills he learned from some of the two dozen white Zimbabwean farmers who moved to Nigeria in 2005, after being kicked off their land by President Robert Mugabe and later attracted by large parcels of land on offer under 25-year leases and commitments of support from the Nigerian government.

Production on his farm is now up.

“We are starting to use fertilizers,” says Mogadi, explaining that he was encouraged to buy fertilizer after seeing yield benefits on the commercial farm. He’s also started planting his maize in a more compact formation, like the Zimbabweans, increasing production from each field planted.

Before the Zimbabweans arrived, there was no mobile phone network in the area and so no reason to have a mobile phone. Now he and most of the other workers have snazzy cellphones, and many have bought



Former Zimbabwean farmers in Nigeria

motorbikes imported from China, often with a loan from their employer.

In the future, when the national power network reaches the Shonga farms, Mogadi is looking forward to having electricity in his home and village for the first time.

Kenny Oyewo, who works as a farm manager, thinks the lessons being learned in Shonga should be exported across Nigeria.

“If there were at least 20 white Zimbabwean farmers in each state,” says Mr. Oyewo, “Nigeria would become one of the most rich countries in the world and we would not even depend on our oil.” Nigeria is the largest crude producer in Africa, but despite the country’s

oil-wealth the majority of Nigerians exist on just a couple of dollars a day.

Key support from a governor

Bukola Saraki, governor of Kwara State, actively pursued the Zimbabwean farmers, approaching them through Zimbabwe’s Commercial Farmers Union and paying for them to stay in a hotel in Kwara while they assessed several proposed sites.

To date, the governor remains personally involved in the project, visiting the farmers in their homes, taking their calls on his mobile phone and personally stepping in to help when Nigeria’s confounding – and often

corrupt – bureaucracy gets in the way.

The Zimbabwean farmers are all too aware how key Mr. Saraki’s support is.

Another group of Zimbabwean farmers who set up in Nasarawa State, east of Nigeria’s capital, Abuja, are close to abandoning their Nigerian venture.

There, farmers have not had strong support from the state authorities, a promised bridge to link their farms to the nearby capital has not been built and agreed-upon bank loans have not materialized.

But Saraki dismisses fears that the commercial farms may stumble with the end of his tenure in three years’ time.

“I think the project has sold itself,” says Saraki. “When we started there were a lot of people who did not believe in it. But I think by now, when we are employing about 3,000 people in Shonga, they are the ones that are going to defend it.”

Oyewo, who is a university graduate and new to farming, says it’s not just farm employees who are learning from the Zimbabweans. “Even local people have been encouraged to seek advice – and get it – from the farmers,” says Oyewo.

In the long term, veterinarian Abubakar Kannike sees great potential for collaboration to develop a new breed of dairy cow that could be exported throughout West Africa.

“The future for us is to develop our own dairy breed mixing the hardy local Fulani breed with the Zimbabweans’ high milk-producing Jersey cows,” says Mr. Kannike.

The lessons go both ways

But the lessons aren’t all being passed in one direction. The Zimbabweans are learning how to deal with a new climate, a new way of doing things.

This area of Nigeria is a far cry from the cool sunny plateaus of Zimbabwe. It’s relentlessly hot and close enough to the Sahara to be shrouded in dust-laden desert winds for months at a time. And in the low-lying tropics, farmers and their families are learning to cope with malaria.

White farmer Hunter Coetzee is paying close attention to Nigeria’s weather patterns, earning a reputation among the rest of the groups as something of a meteorologist.

One of the steepest learning curves, farmers say, has been unearthing the hidden corrupt practices that mar Nigerian society.

“Our first year farming here, we bought our fertilizer off the market,” says farmer Irvine Reid. But when the yield was disappointing, they sent a sample of the fertilizer off for analysis. “There was next to no fertilizer, so little of the active ingredient in there, that we may as well not have bothered.”

But after a traumatic and often violent departure from Zimbabwe, the commercial farmers are learning about West African hospitality. “Everyone’s been very welcoming,” says Reid, “and that’s really nice.”

Joe Gunn appointed new CPJ Executive Director

Karen Diepeveen

After a prayerful and thorough search process, the Board of Directors for Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) is pleased to announce the appointment of a new Executive Director, Joe Gunn. Board chair Janet Wesselius expressed the board’s delight: “We are very excited about Joe’s vision for CPJ. His extensive knowledge of justice issues will complement the in-depth research CPJ has already done, strengthening CPJ’s unique public justice presence in Canadian policy debates.”

Harry Kits, outgoing Executive Director, agreed. “Joe’s appointment is great news for CPJ. I have every confidence that, with Joe’s wide experience and his commitment to advancing public justice, CPJ will continue to make a great contribution to Canada,” said Harry.

Joe is enthusiastic about participating in CPJ’s public justice approach to policy debates, and anticipates linking his past work to CPJ’s research and analysis. “CPJ’s practices of public justice and seeking the common good gives concrete expression to what I experienced in Latin America’s expression of ‘the preferential treatment of the poor,’” he said.

Joe has been part of many justice initiatives. In Latin America, he worked in refugee camps and for Canadian Save the Children. In Canada, he has engaged in

policy development, research and advocacy with various organizations, most recently at the Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation established by the Notre Dame sisters in Ottawa.

CPJ staff are eager to welcome Joe. CPJ policy analyst Chandra Pasma said, “The policy staff are very happy to have Joe come work alongside us in our advocacy for a federal poverty reduction strategy. We also anticipate the contribution Joe’s rich insight will bring to our dialogue on diversity in 21st century Canada.”

As part of his varied experiences, Joe has played a dynamic role in communities and campaign advocacy. He worked as campaign coordinator for Make Poverty History, developing this high profile campaign through public education, electronic advocacy and a wide range of grassroots initiatives.

Joe has also been active in various ecumenical circles. Rev. Jim Dekker of Covenant Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, Ontario, first met him while Joe was serving as the founding vice-chair of KAIROS Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. Pleased with CPJ’s announcement, Rev. Dekker commented, “Joe’s appointment as CPJ’s Executive Director flows in the same healthy current of ecumenical cooperation in which Joe has faithfully

navigated for years.”

Rev. Dekker continued, “One of the loveliest serendipities in my association with Joe is that I have seen once again how the long tradition of Catholic social justice teaching and action provides a healing link with the Kuyperian Reformational movement, bringing together in God’s timing what sadly for a necessary time was separated.

“May God bless Joe and CPJ for a long, deepening and broadening time of Christian social justice work and political advocacy in Canada.”

Living in Ottawa, Joe and his wife are currently being raised by their 15 year-old twins, who have been fundraising to go to Ecuador this summer “without Mom and Dad” with Free the Children.

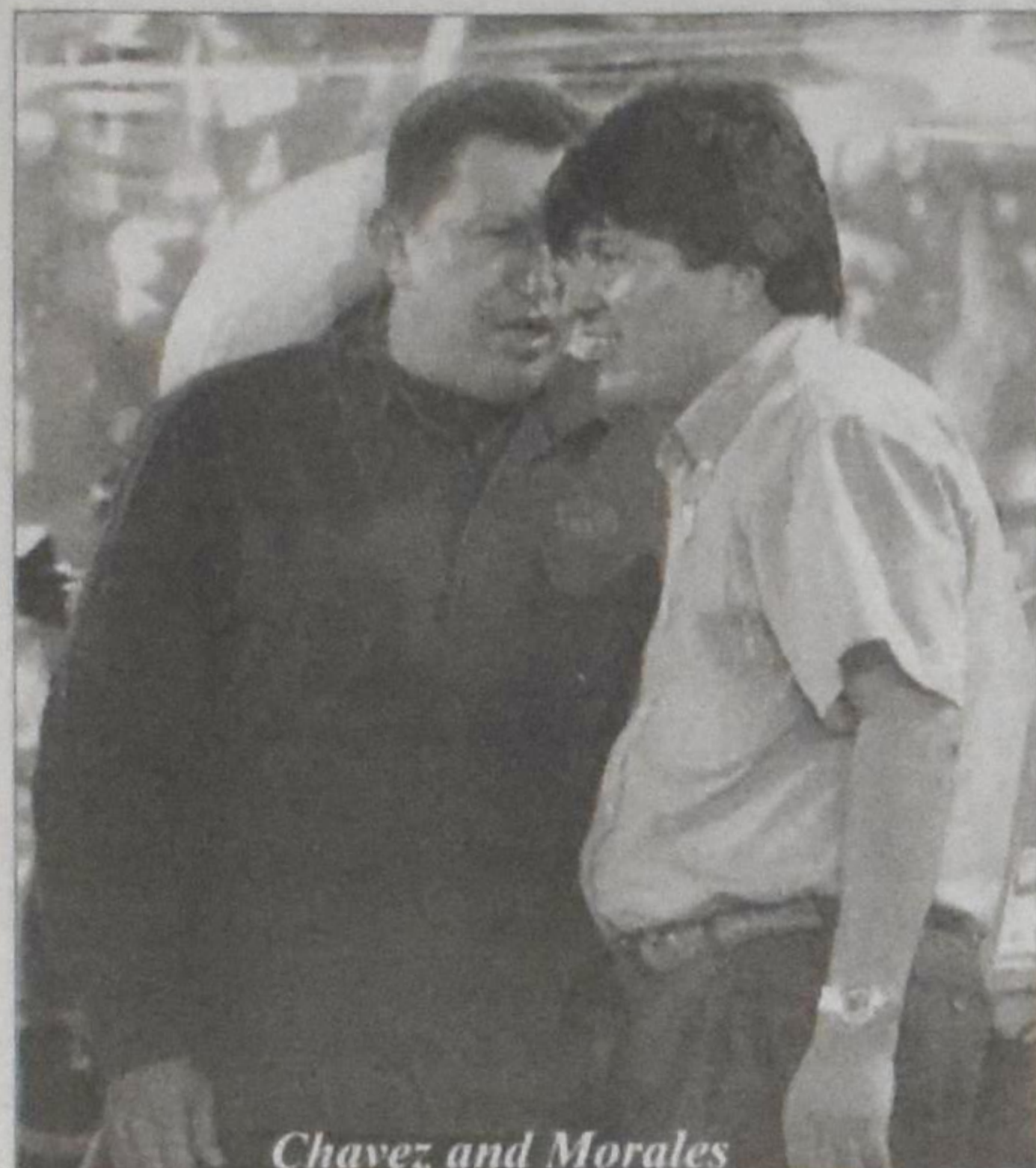
Joe will be joining the CPJ team on August 5, and is very much looking forward to this time after watching CPJ’s development over the years, including the recent move to Ottawa.

“I’ve long been attracted to CPJ’s articulation of public justice and work for the common good as essential elements of ‘hopeful citizenship,’” said Joe. “It will be an exciting and welcome challenge to bring this positive message to life through CPJ’s work in Ottawa and across the country.”

Karen Diepeveen is CPJ’s communications coordinator.

Sarah Simpson is a correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

News



Chavez and Morales

Paraguay continued from page 1

Lugo hopes to use the additional revenue to set up programs like those in Brazil that have helped large numbers of those living in abject poverty. Neither Brazil nor Argentina, however, have expressed any inclination to renegotiate the energy treaties. If they refuse, will Lugo be forced to follow the example of Chavez in Venezuela and resort to nationalization?

Although the income from the hydroelectric dams is substantial, agriculture still accounts for about 40 percent of the country's economy. Lugo has also promised there would be land reform to address the large gap in income between rich and poor in the country. But can that be done without harming the agricultural sector? Time will only tell, but Lugo seems committed to making these things happen without undertaking drastic and dramatic measures.

In his campaign Lugo was careful not to align his politics with that of the strident socialism of Chavez in Venezuela and Morales in Bolivia. His Patriotic Alliance for Change includes members from the left as well as traditional liberals. Unlike Chavez and Morales, he has also refrained from using the U.S. as a whipping boy to enhance his image. This was enough to prompt the U.S. to quickly congratulate Lugo on his victory and to express their willingness to work with him.

Paraguay is Latin America's second poorest country, behind only Bolivia. The country is especially known as a source of counterfeit CDs and DVDs, fake designer clothes, perfumes, watches and electronic gadgets. Brazilians and Argentines buy the stuff in quantity to resell on the streets back home. But there is also a darker side to such cheating as international criminals launder money and trade illegal weapons in the area where the borders of Brazil and Argentina meet that of Paraguay. Smuggling is rife in the area.

A right-wing extremist?

Longtime readers of this space may perhaps recall that categorizing political visions in terms of left and right is one of my pet peeves. Too often pundits will use these labels to avoid having to listen to those with whom they disagree. Moreover, they are often used to imply guilt by association. If Hitler was a rightist, then all those on the right are at least potential nazis. Similarly, if Stalin was a leftist, then presumably anyone on the left shares guilt for communist atrocities.

The use of these labels is no older than 1789, when the French National Assembly seated monarchists to the right of the speaker and republicans to his left. But of course the meaning of these terms has shifted over the past two centuries. No one can credibly claim that, when the media accuse Stephen Harper of harbouring a right-wing agenda, they mean that the Prime Minister wishes to strengthen the monarchy. Similarly, New Democratic Party leader Jack Layton has expressed satisfaction with the status of the Queen in Canada, claiming that other items are much higher on his party's agenda.

When I first began teaching more than two decades ago, I followed the text books in asserting that at present the most common way to categorize left and right is by their respective attitudes towards economic equality. Right-wingers are willing to tolerate greater inequality than are left-wingers, who typically call on the state to intervene in the interest of levelling economic conditions across class lines. Rightists may or may not be libertarians, but in general they are unenthusiastic about government acting to redistribute wealth.

This meaning of left and right held through much of the twentieth century. In the US President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal coalition brought together a diverse array of Americans who had been adversely affected by the Great

Depression of the 1930s. Socialism as such was never popular in that country, yet the left was occupied by a liberalism that sought to equalize economic opportunities for all Americans – something that still animates many supporters of the Democratic Party.

This began to change around forty years ago, though many of us were slow to notice it until much later. As Louis Bolce and Gerald De Maio have observed, since then the two major political parties have polarized around religious and cultural issues, thereby bringing the American political landscape closer to the European pattern of the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries. This suggests that the Republican Party has become the vehicle of the traditionally religious, while the Democratic Party has become increasingly secularized. This division cuts across socio-economic lines and indicates that even right and left are now understood differently. I will return to this subject in a future column.

In the meantime, given the orientation of the popular media in both Canada and the US, it matters little if I am sceptical of the general efficacy of the free market and Bush's foreign policies, or believe in a social safety net to temper the rough edges of capitalism. Never mind whether I believe government has an obligation to protect the physical environment or care for the poor. As long as I persist in claiming that the lives of the unborn deserve legal protection, or that marriage is a divinely-ordained institution with which the state ought not to tamper, the media will nevertheless see fit to label me a right-wing extremist.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and usually calls himself a fanatical moderate.



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Editorial

The comfortable routines of a terminal disease

Harry der Nederlanden

Almost all of us complain when life becomes all routine. The songs of the 70s were full of caricatures of those who settled into the "safe" routine of an 9 to 5 job, marrying, having children, keeping house, paying the mortgage and mowing the lawn.

At the same time, however, pretty well all of us have our settled routines that we savor. And if we can't follow them we become out of sorts and cranky.

Even when terminal cancer invades your life – hardly a routine event – you find ways to make it so – almost. Rose and I have made our bi-weekly trips to the Juravinski Cancer Center in Hamilton a comfortable routine with its own pleasures.

Even the cycles of your body's reaction to the toxic drugs become familiar and routine. I knew that three or four days after my infusion of chemo, all energy would be sapped from my body and I'd be content to lie around doing nothing much for three days or so. And then my energy would begin to return. My taste buds would go through similar cycles, so that certain foods would revolt me one week and taste fine the next. Such cycles and rhythms, too, became almost routine.

I think in some ways when you're under treatment for cancer, you begin to value routine more. You figure as long as things remain more or less the same, you're doing okay. When I was first put on chemo, within a day a very troublesome cough and intense pain in my side virtually vanished. I felt almost normal again. So several months later, when my doctor proposed changing the concoction, I had misgivings. Though the rhythms of my life had changed dramatically, they had become a new normal for my wife and I.

A few months ago, a catscan revealed that a clot was developing in a main vein to my liver, so I had to learn to give myself shots of blood-thinner in my stomach. A little later, another series of shots was added. Although the shots of blood thinner left behind purple bruises, they too became routine – almost. Jabbing yourself with a needle never seems quite normal, and some evenings I find myself looking for things to do to postpone the moment.

Not everything can be fitted into a new normal, however. About two weeks ago, because of the blood

thinner, my stoma (that what doctors call the new arsehole they carve into you after snipping off the end of your colon) began bleeding and wouldn't stop. After calling the doctor, off we were to emergency at the Henderson Hospital next to the Juravinski Cancer Center. We by-passed the local emergency because our last experience there was less than encouraging. At the Henderson I was in a bed less than 10 minutes after walking through the door.

There's really nothing routine about going to emergency. It's the very opposite of routine. After I'd been bedded down, a nurse pulled off my colostomy bag, and there was my pitiful stoma, all exposed. Some blue pads and towels were given to me, and there I lay watching, wiping away blood and feces and stinking up the entire emergency ward. I was glad the other patients were all old and feeble; otherwise they'd have risen up en masse to demand my banishment.

Humiliation followed humiliation. When you have your belly covered with blood and feces, it is hard to flirt with pretty nurses. And there seems to be a plethora of doctors at the Henderson. They came in ones and two, in all sexes and races – surgeons, oncologists, phlebotomists (ever heard of those before?), and some who kept their specialty secret. Some returned again and again to gaze at my miserable stoma. Some kept their distance, while others dabbed at my stoma to get a better look. Some of the latter were, no doubt, interns trying to impress their superiors. Sometimes doctors from competing specialties met and had whispered consultations on the other side of the curtain to debate strategies – or perhaps to bet on the outcome of the NHL playoffs.

Who knows? You're never sure how large your fate figures in the minds of doctors scurrying from one case to another.

After having my surgically manufactured arsehole on public display for a few hours, I developed a greater appreciation for God's wisdom in placing it behind where we don't have to look at it. Staring at your own arsehole for hours while visitors keep dropping in is not an edifying experience. Editors of Christian newspapers with an ounce of dignity would not write about such things. But I confess I've lost my dignity and decorum after this.

But picture this. One expects to be humiliated by members of the medical profession. After all, we're often told, medical science dehumanizes you and treats you as just another bloody arsehole (no pun intended). But my wife, Rose, my one source of comfort and courage in all this, just added to my humiliation.

She had brought along a thriller and she was in the last chapters, where the suspense is ratcheted way up. I had taken along a biography of the 17th century thinker Blaise Pascal. I have bifocals, so I wear my glasses all the time. Rose only needs glasses for reading, so she's often misplacing them. On this auspicious morning, Rose had simply forgotten her glasses. So there she sat beside my bed in my fumes wondering how her thriller turns out, but unable to read.

To my horror and disillusion, every time I rested my eyes for a moment, closing them against the harsh lights overhead, she'd silently steal up on me and snatch my glasses from my nose. Perhaps I dozed a bit now and again, but does that make me fair game? My eyes would seek out the passage that I had been reading in the book still before me, and all the words would be blurry. "Oh no!" I'd think, "The chemo is is ruining my eyesight!"

My hand would go up to adjust my glasses on my nose and they wouldn't be there. Then when I turned my head to look at my beloved mate always there to stand by me, there she sat, her nose buried in her thriller. And there on her nose were my glasses.

And she would not surrender them easily. "Just another page," she'd say, but I suspect she read the next page as well. This happened not just once, but repeatedly. And she evinced not the slightest shame or remorse for her crime of stalking a bed-ridden invalid for his glasses.

So here's another way you routines get ruined – by low level betrayal. When you lie around with your arsehole exposed, inevitably you get treated like one. Us colostomy patients don't get no respect. That's what happens when your arsehole goes before instead of tagging along behind.

This past week our routines were altered yet again.

My oncologist took up my cause and got official permission from the Ontario government for me to be treated with a new drug called Erbitux. It was approved for use in Ontario long ago but to get it you have to go south of the border. My doctor's plan was to simply add Erbitux to my present concoction, which was no longer doing the job. After receiving an infusion of Erbitux in Buffalo, New York, the next day I'd have to go in the opposite direction to Hamilton to receive the rest of my chemo.

When we went to Buffalo to meet the oncologist there, he asked me a list of questions and then left the room to call my oncologist in Hamilton. I am now an international patient.

When the doctor returned, he said, "I'd like to put you on both Erbitux and Avistan." Among cancer patients in Canada, the name of Avistan is well-known. It's the name of a promising new drug that is financially out of reach for most of us.

When I raised the obvious question of cost, he replied, "It will be free!"

Now there's a sentence to warm a Dutchman's heart.

"Yes, the company that makes Avistan will pay for it."

Aha! A light went on. The questions.... I've never smoked and I never drink alcohol. I'm comparatively young and strong, and I'm on no other medications. Perhaps in a trial I'll make Avistan look good. I hope so.

At last my years of abstinence have paid off. I'm not sure if it's abstinence if you deny yourself things you don't like. I've never liked cigarette smoke and alcohol, so maybe it doesn't count as a virtue. But it probably marks me as an ideal guinea pig for Avistan.

So I should be celebrating my good fortune. However, I'm also filled with trepidation. I've grown used to the old routines, side effects and bi-weekly cycles. Now everything is going to change. We're venturing into entirely new territory. Lists of wholly new possible side-effects scroll through my mind.

All these drugs involve risks," said my American oncologist. True, life itself involves risks, but I've grown attached to my routines.

I feel a little as if I'm surrendering myself to be a guinea pig for the billion dollar drug industry and that my fate is in their hands. But I know that from the day of my birth my fate has been in the hands of someone infinitely more powerful than the drug industry. And my comfort is this – that even if I'm not healed here, he will heal me there.

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Editor: Harry der Nederlanden editor@christiancourier.ca
Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden rose@christiancourier.ca
Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer
ads@christiancourier.ca

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5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N1V1

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Church news/Letter

Former North Korean agents tell of infiltrating Christians

Hunting for believers includes fabricating mock prayer meetings

More on Christians in North

Korea (Continued from last issue)

BANGKOK (Christian News Today) — Former police and security officers in North Korea told a U.S. government body recently that their superiors had instructed them to play the role of Christians and infiltrate underground prayer meetings in order to incriminate, arrest, imprison and periodically execute believers in North Korea.

Interviewed for a report issued by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the six officers were tasked — before they fled North Korea — with finding and eliminating small groups of Christians.

They said the North Korean government considers religion — and Christianity in particular — to be the primary threat to national security, according to the report, released April 15. Four of the six security agents had worked with the North Korean National Security Agency (NSA), two with the People's Security Agency (PSA) and another for the Korean Workers' Party. They also had meted out severe punishment to refugees repatriated to North Korea who admitted having contact with Chinese or South Korean Christians.

Taught theology to entrap

The six security agents said there have been increased attempts to halt religious activities along the border with China, including setting up mock prayer meetings to trap refugee converts. Security agents were even given basic theological training to enable them to infiltrate churches in China and search for North Koreans in attendance.

The agents described their detention and interrogation of North Korean refugees as "counter-intelligence work," since the government believes that South Korean missionary involvement in the refugee crisis is espionage.

One refugee held at a PSA detention center in Saetbyeol, North Hamgyeong province, was told directly that if she had carried the Bible into North Korea, she would be "sent to the [labor camps] and they would kill her there."

Border police sent another refugee to the PSA detention center in North Hamgyeong province and later to the NSA's prison at Onseong. "They ... asked whether I had contact with Christians. I was kicked and struck severely. I had to stand all day long and I was not permitted to move or speak.... When they asked again whether I had heard of Christianity, I admitted that I had."

No mercy for 'religious people'

If repatriated refugees have had little or no contact with faith groups, border police hand them over to the PSA for short-term detention. If such contact is discovered, however, they are handed over to the NSA for possible torture, sentencing to prison labor camps, or execution.

"There are no preliminary hearings when religious people get caught," one agent said. "[We] regard them as anti-revolutionary

elements. When such an offender is caught in North Korea, the NSA officers surround the person and kick and beat the person severely before interrogating."

Still another agent confirmed that, "The most important question asked to the repatriated is whether they have met South Korean missionaries or evangelists or encountered or experienced religion. If they confess that they have met missionaries or deacons... then without any further questions, they will be sent to the NSA and they are as good as dead. However, only a small number of cases involve religions."

Both the PSA and the NSA play an important role in "counter-intelligence" operations. The PSA is a more general police force, while the NSA is the North Korean counterpart to the U.S.'s FBI or CIA. The PSA gathers information on every citizen for a dossier that is kept on file and used by the NSA to "decide whether to arrest a person," according to one former NSA officer.

Neighbor informs on neighbor

The spread of Christianity in North Korea is regarded as a deliberate conspiracy between South Koreans and the United States to undermine or destroy the North Korean government.

"We arrest political offenders after securing evidence [through] our informants," one agent said. "Things like possessing religious books, sharing one's faith with others or preaching cannot exist because they undermine the Kim Jong Il regime." He continued, "All we need [to arrest someone] is one bit of evidence such as the Bible with someone's name on it. If the Bible is found, [the NSA] leaves it until the real owner shows up."

Another agent explained that there were four groups of surveillance teams — "the NSA, the PSA, the Party, and the neighborhood unit. [We] give instructions to the neighborhood unit and the Primary Party Committee to watch [certain] people. We tell them to watch them closely and report [the list of] people who visit them. We are to be informed once every 15 days."

Security agents given medals

Agents are rewarded with medals, an increase in wages or promotions for identifying and arresting religious offenders, according to the report, entitled, "A Prison Without Bars." Some security agents become "desperate because if they don't catch two or more cases, they cannot get promoted and they might get kicked out [of the NSA]," one agent explained.

NSA officers also learn skills and techniques for interrogating religious people. One NSA informant said he was taught to look for "a person who remains silent with closed eyes and meditates, or when habitual smokers or drinkers quit smoking or drinking all of a sudden." These people were "enemies of



The realities of a N. Korean concentration camp are brought to the stage with music.

the state" and should be watched closely, according to NSA instructors.

According to one former agent, "We learn that because a religion is a drug, it can be spread in a second." Another said, "In a way... all threats are related to religion."

Christians dig their own graves

One agent who worked for 20 years in a Political Offense Concentration Camp — where Christians are often sent — said he witnessed secret executions where "the [accused] digs the hole to be buried" before being executed. Other agents however said that public executions of political offenders — including Christians — had decreased in recent years due to negative reactions from the public.

According to one agent, punishment varies according to the person's activity — "whether he was active or in hiding. The fact that a person keeps a Bible means that this person plans to believe in a religion in the future.... The most severe punishment is applied to those who are engaged in the [new religious] activity: those who carry the Bible from China and those Christians who help North Korean refugees in China."

As one refugee testified, "My relative by marriage was caught while giving away a Bible, so the entire family was taken to Prison 22 [a penal labor camp]. They were taken there under the category of religious spy."

Christian school tuition

With the current discussion about the funding of faith-based schools I am reminded how things are done now without any funding. Perhaps the time is not ripe, (personally I am against any government money), but I do feel sometime in the near future things will change and our schools may be integrated into the public system. What I am trying to say is that the history of parental support of Christian schools is an important part of our history and God's hand in this.

I wonder has anyone written about how the parents managed to pay the high cost of their children's education while also paying taxes to the public system? How many stories must be out there of mothers taking a job, often menial, to raise those funds!

I know of some who washed the ear pieces that were used on the headphones of Air Canada planes. My husband and I were the custodians of the local Christian school and he drove a public school bus and also ran his own grocery store. We sent all six of our children through Christian grade and high school. Another family used a small part of their vegetable farm and dedicated a crop to pay for the Christian school tuition. Yet another couple bred dogs with the offspring funding the tuition.

So I thought perhaps someone on your staff may want to pursue this story line and perhaps save this part of our history for future generations.

Addy Ellens
Bradford Ont.

We're game at CC.

Send us your stories about how you (or others you know) raised the money to put your kids through Christian school and we'll publish some of them.

Editor

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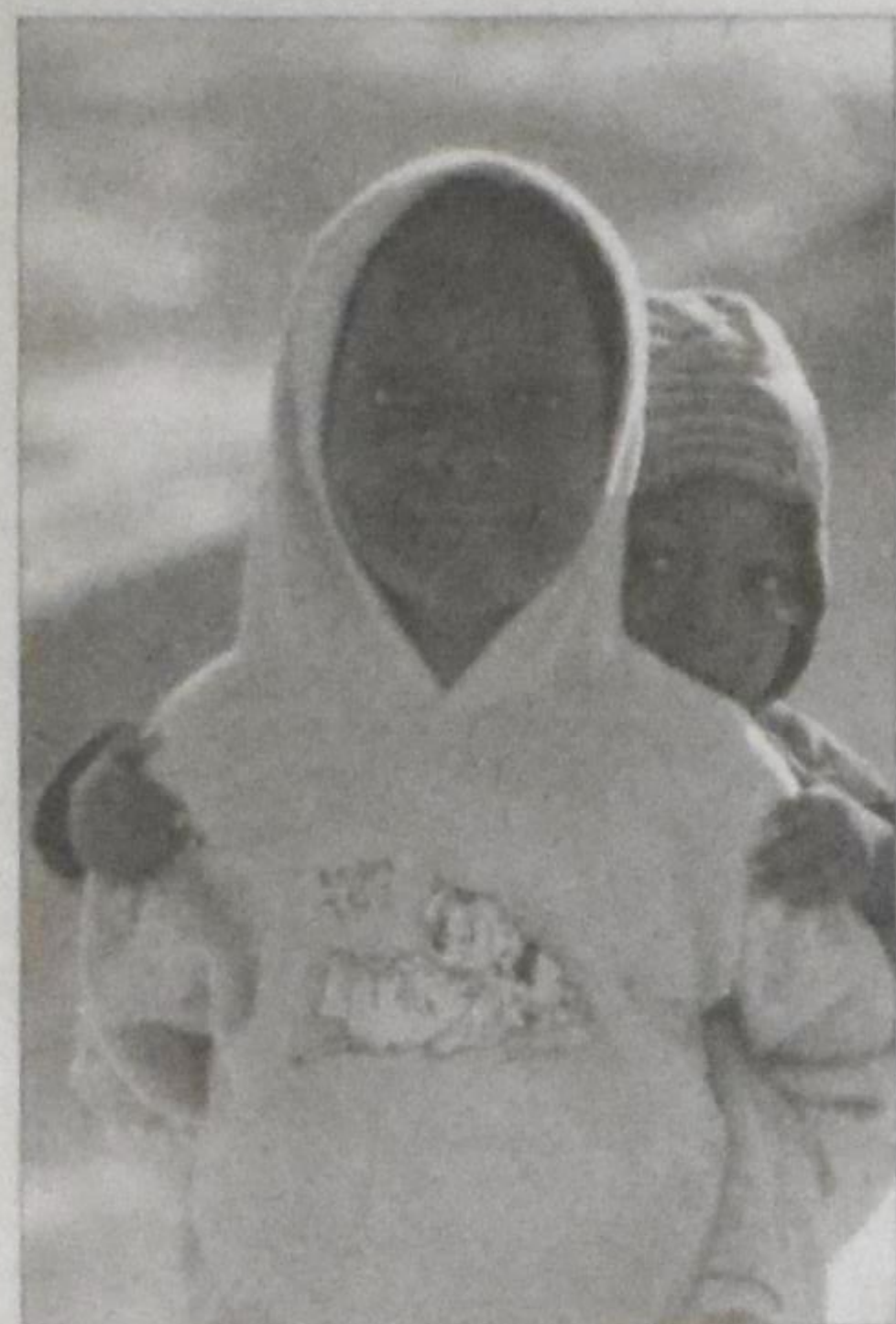
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Mission

Nigeria – its challenges and hopes for the future



ing conditions. It was also interesting to see this beautiful country, and meet its friendly people. We were impressed with the beauty of the country, the challenges the people face, and their expressions of hope for the future.

We visited Nigeria on behalf of the International Institute for Christian Studies (IICS), an organization based in Kansas City which sponsors Christian professors to teach overseas in secular universities. Forty professors are teaching in about a dozen foreign countries in Asia, Africa, South America, and central and eastern Europe. The Canadian affiliate of IICS is Christian Studies International (CSI). Henk serves as the Executive Director of CSI and is also a board member of IICS. His role is to provide administrative and home support to the Canadian professors working overseas. Nine IICS professors work in Nigeria, several under CSI. We were asked to visit these professors in Nigeria to learn about their work, and also to lead a weekend retreat for the professors and their families. As well, at one of the universities we gave presentations on leadership, and on mental health. Vicky's talk on mental health attracted more than 600 students! She also visited an addiction centre.

Christian professors in Nigeria's secular universities

IICS professors in Nigeria make a significant impact. They teach hundreds of college and university students in five different public institutions in central Nigeria. Adrian Helleman, Wendy Helleman, Danny McCain, Yoilah Yilpet, and Katerina Korb teach at the University of Jos. Rudy Wiebe teaches at the Federal College of Education in Pankshin, Rob Lillo at the State College of Education at Gindiri, John Lotzgesell at the College of Education at Akwanga, and Layne Turner at the Kaduna State College in Gidan Waya. All these institutions are located within driving distance of the city of Jos.

The dedication of these professors is remarkable. They work and live under difficult conditions. We visited them all and observed this first hand. Classes can number several hundred students who meet in rooms intended for less than a third of that number and sometimes jammed with rickety and even topless desks. Students often sit on the ledge of an open window. Educational materials are few and technical teaching aids are virtually non-existent. Teaching schedules can be haphazard, often interrupted by faculty strikes or infra-structure failures.

The professors working in Nigeria are all qualified to teach at colleges and universities in North America. How-

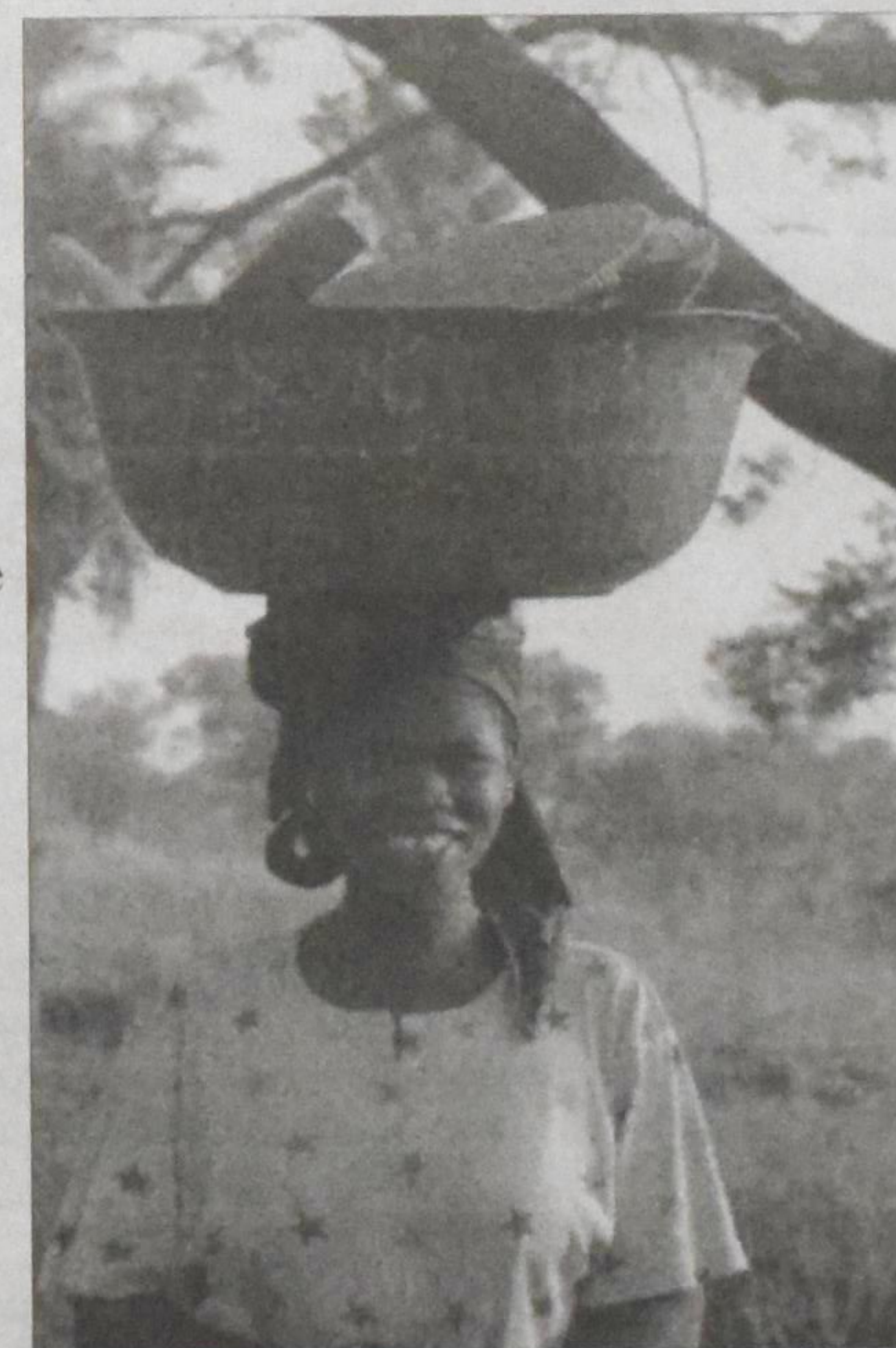
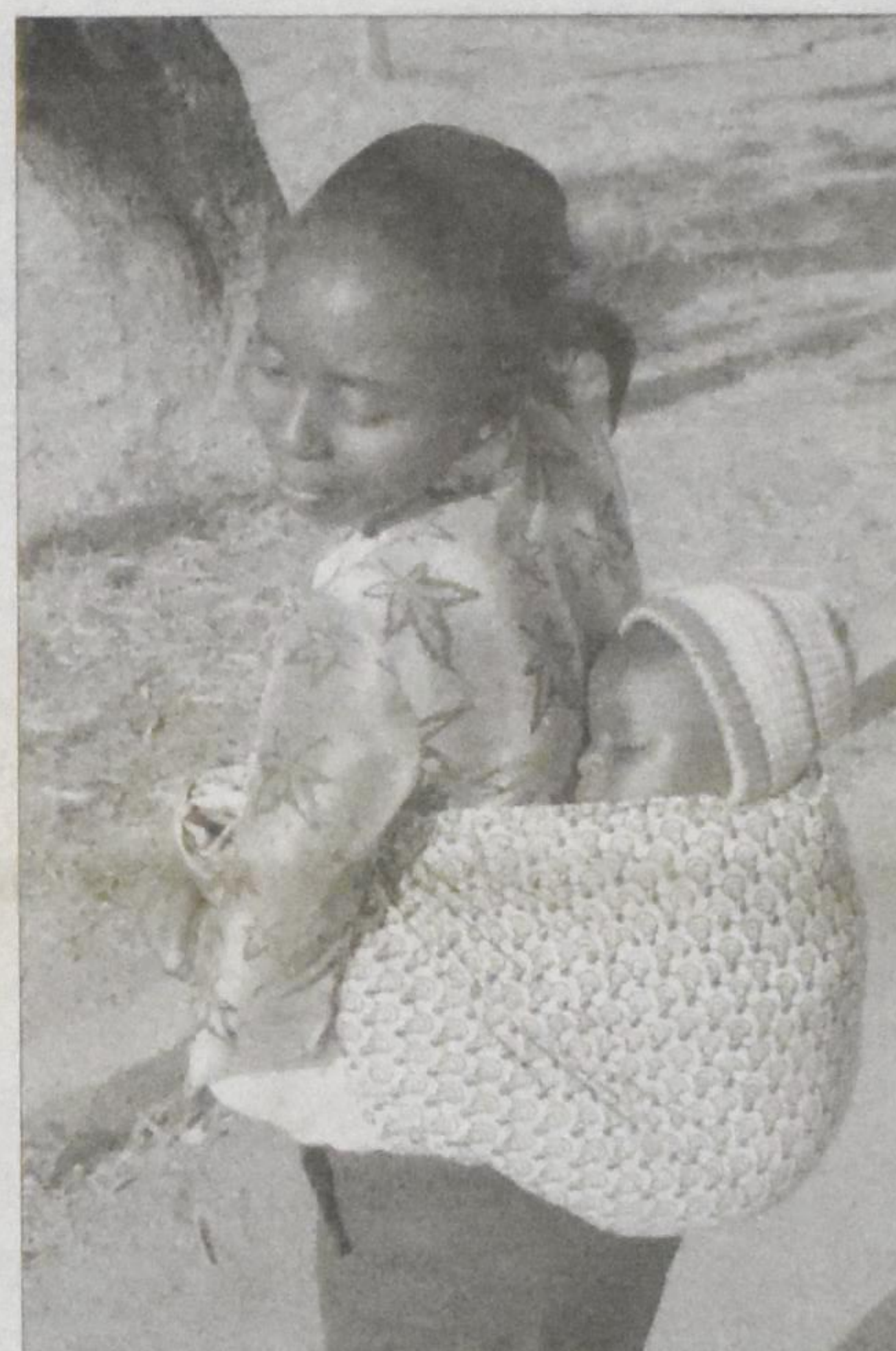
ever, they commit themselves to making a difference in Nigeria. Several of them have been there for many years. Their modest income is funded via donations from churches, family members and friends. Their living conditions tend to be simple. For some there is no running water and electrical power interruptions are daily occurrences. Managing households is time consuming. Cooking is basically done from scratch and water is filtered. Traveling is dangerous. Pedestrians, buzzing motorcycles, and vehicles of all kinds share the narrow roads. Accidents are common. Everyone stops to pray before traveling anywhere.

The spouses of the professors contribute in their own unique ways. They work in health care, they teach, and lead reading clubs with neighborhood children. Some are also collecting culturally appropriate books to create a library. We met a teacher who takes time off work every year to go to Nigeria to teach local women how to read to children, to value books, and to teach children to read. Vicky was so enthused by the work of these women, that she started a project collecting books for children in Nigeria. Two women in Edmonton have joined her in this effort. If you are interested in donating children's books please get in touch with Vicky.

Hope in the face of challenges

Nigeria is a country with a population of about 140 million. People have to cope with difficult living conditions. Most are poor, with an average annual income of less than \$1000. Their average life expectancy is 48 years. Compare that to about 80 for us in North America. While the country has significant income from oil, these funds tend not to reach the people. Corruption is rampant.

HIV/AIDS is still seen as an important problem in Nigeria. Its prevention has a very high public profile, especially in colleges and universities. Dr. Danny McCain, one of the IICS professors teaching at the University of Jos, has played a leading role in developing an interfaith (Muslim and Christian) program of instruction for high school teachers, to teach students about the dangers of HIV/AIDS and its prevention. The program is



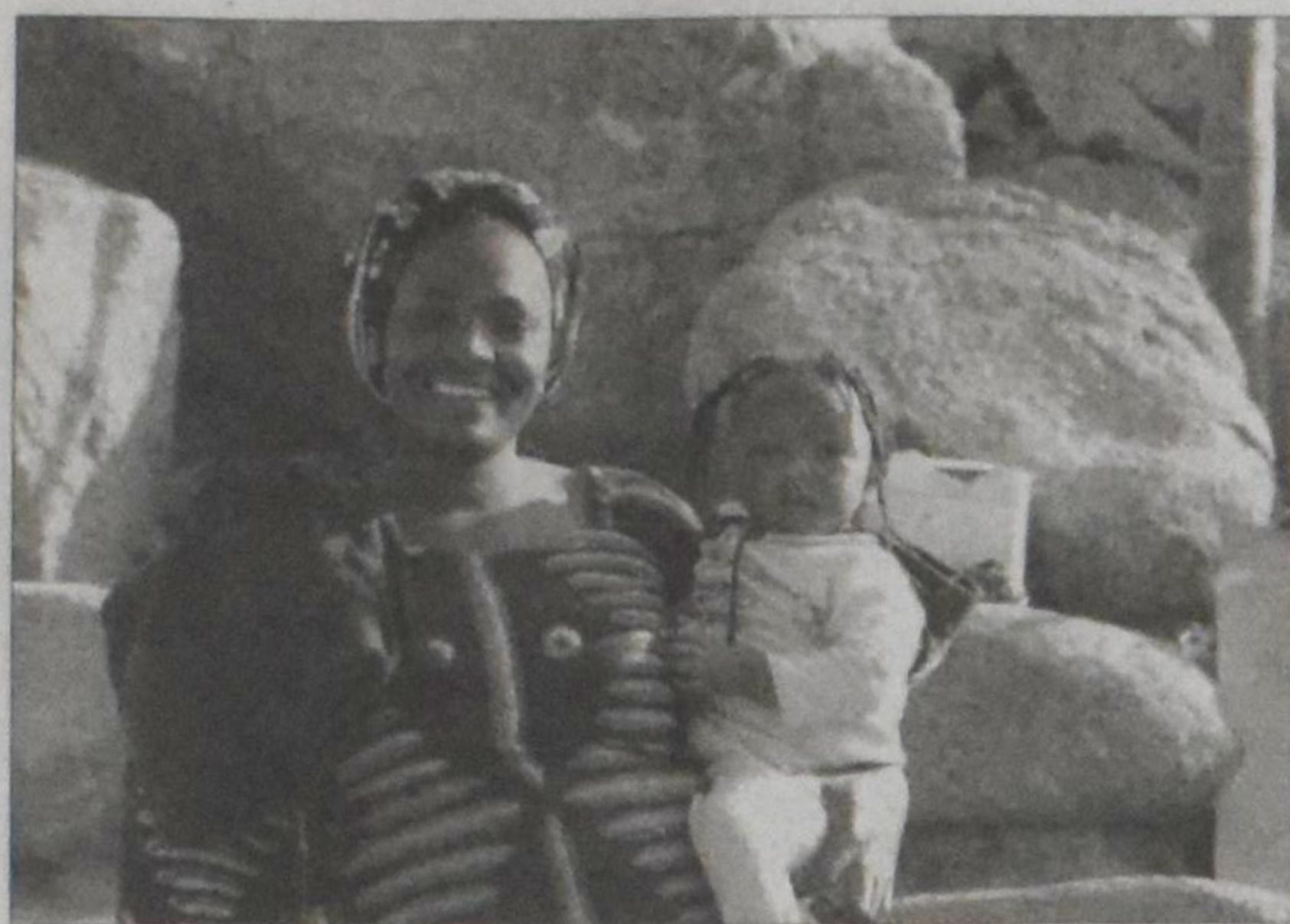
being adopted in teachers colleges in several Nigerian states, and is an important example of Muslim-Christian cooperation. We were privileged to attend and bring greetings at a meeting of educators and government representatives discussing the expansion of this program throughout Nigeria. This is a clear instance of the gift of hope facilitated by the dedicated ministry of IICS/CSI staff. We witnessed no overt animosity between Muslims and Christians. People seem to be accepting of each others' faith. However, there are areas in Nigeria where religious tensions are more overt.

Another health concern in Nigeria is the prevalence of polio. Nigeria is one of a handful of countries in the world that still has not eradicated polio. Many people, young and old, suffer from partial paralysis as a result of this illness. We were able to visit a small factory (run by Ayuba Gufwan, himself a victim of polio) that manufactures wheelchairs for polio victims. More than 1800 of these wheelchairs have been built. They are given away free of charge. In the past polio sufferers had no way of getting around. Affected people usually stayed home and received no education. The project is financed through the *Beautiful Gate Initiative*, a charitable organization started by the American pastor Dr. Ron Rice. For some time CSI collected Canadian funds for this project, initiated by professor Rudy Wiebe. However, recently CRWRC (Canada) has agreed to sponsor it. A donation of \$140 buys a wheelchair. It is an amazing ministry offering people independent mobility and new and exciting opportunities.

We found that wherever we went, Nigerian people seemed happy in spite of their hardships. People had an open look on their faces. They

were hospitable, kind, and welcoming towards us, greeting us with a big smile, an outstretched hand, and always the same words: "You are welcome." In spite of their poverty, people wear beautiful, brightly colored clothes. Weaving cloth is a flourishing industry and women design

Stewardship



cloth, sew dresses and sell them. Their headgear is also intriguing, the higher and fancier the better, often made of the same material as the dresses. It is all a pleasure to behold. So are the expressions on people's faces. Nigerian people's eyes are like wells. They are deep and fluid and tell stories far beyond the expressions on their faces. That's probably true of all people, but we truly saw it there. Life is not easy, and their history is not easy either, but Nigerians have hope. Many Nigerians are Christians and the first thing they talk about is how much they love and trust God, and how grateful they are for their blessings. They are a kind, generous and fun-loving people.

Perhaps the most surprising feature of Nigerian life is how much religion plays a role in public life. Nearly all Nigerians are either practicing Christians or Muslims, and this is evident in the way public life is organized. For example, our presentations in Pankshin, a public federal institution, were opened with prayer and we were welcomed by the College President with Christian words of appreciation. In Gindiri, the President asked us to pray for his college when we visited him in his office. Many other examples can be given. This would not be experienced in North America. In this context, CSI and IICS professors can make a tremendous impact as they present a Christian worldview in their teaching and interaction with students.

Lasting memories

Here are some of the impressions that stood out for us. The strong, lean people carefully tending their lush green vegetables gardens, using water from the nearby river. Their shy expressions at first and then their beaming smiles when asked if we could take a photograph. A swaying suspension bridge over a river, and an older woman walking on it precariously, carrying a tray on her head loaded with fruit. The young women, their heads piled with bananas, competing with each other for customers. The shy children with their full eyes. The many women lugging burdens of firewood, buckets, sacks, potatoes and anything that needed transporting. The young mother daily selling tiny little peppers in a small hut by the roadside. The assertiveness of the people and their pride in their country and traditions. The laughing children with glorious names such as Queen, Mercy, Precious, Jewel, or Promise. The parents' love for their children and their awareness that education is important and a privilege. The bright markets. The dangerous roads, the smoke from fires along the roadside. And many, many more images....

In summary, our visit to Nigeria was a wonderful, eye-opening experience. We met many generous people. We were introduced to the great work of professors and their families. We became more aware of the need to support them generously, both with money and prayer. If an opportunity to visit a developing country comes your way, embrace it.

Henk and Vicky Van Andel
vickyv@telus.net
henkva@telus.net

Day 6 - Humankind

The sixth in the series "Seven reflections based on the days of creation."

On the sixth day of creation after he had finished creating all creatures, God said: "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (Gen. 1:26)

The creative hand of God on the sixth day brings the creative acts of God to a crescendo. Mankind is the final act – the last wave of God's creative hand.

Consider how God creates mankind. God the master architect/engineer uses his own image or likeness as the template. We are modeled after God. Equally amazing is the purpose for which he creates us – we are to rule over essentially everything on earth! In both considerations, I'm blown away by God's choices! He has created the world, its creatures and resources and then basically says – now I am going to create mankind in my image and make them to be the managers of the world that I've made.

Did you ever inherit something? Maybe it's not worth much but it means a lot to you. Or it could be as big as taking over the family business or farm. Consider how Israel was promised by and eventually received from God the 'Promised Land' with all its resources – its villages and towns, its fields and farms, etc. Did you deserve to receive an inheritance or did Israel deserve to receive the Promised Land? Yet, God invests in us and does entrust his people individually with resources (some more than others) and corporately we are entrusted to manage this world's resources!

Reread the text above again and notice the use of 'us' and 'our' language that refers to God in plural form. God is one in three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in perfect unity – God is a God of relationships and he models it perfectly. God wants us to be in relationship with him. We are the culmination of his creative hand. God is sensitive to relationships. Later in Genesis we read how God had placed Adam in the Garden of Eden and God noticed that Adam was alone. So God created Eve and gave her to Adam to be one with him. And God himself would regularly come and visit with them – walking in the garden during the 'cool of the day' (Gen. 3:8b). God desires to be close to us. That is why sin is so devastating to us and to him.

Simon and Garfunkel popularized a song that contrasts sharply with what I believe God meant when he created man. It also is indicative of the alienation from God that is happening in our society. Here are the complete lyrics of that song courtesy of www.lyricsfreak.com:

*A winters day/ In a deep and dark
December/ I am alone/ Gazing from my
window to the streets below/ On a freshly
fallen silent shroud of snow/ I am a rock,
I am an island.*

*I've built walls/ A fortress deep and
mighty/ That none may penetrate/ I
have no need of friendship/ friendship
causes pain/ Its laughter and its loving I
disdain/ I am a rock/ I am an island.*

*Don't talk of love/ But I've heard
the words before/ It's sleeping in my*

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick DeGraaf

*memory/ I won't disturb the slumber of feelings
that have died/ If I never loved I never would have
cried/ I am a rock, I am an island.
I have my books/ And my poetry to protect me/ I
am shielded in my armor/ Hiding in my room, safe
within my womb/ I touch no one and no one touches
me/ I am a rock/ I am an island.*

And a rock feels no pain/ And an island never cries.

God did not create us to be 'rocks', to be alone and devoid of emotion. We touch, we feel pain and we love. Rather, God created us to be in communion with each other and him. We do ourselves wrong by building walls to keep God out! Consider how Jesus instituted the Lord's supper to serve as a very visible reminder of God's desire to commune with us. When Christ left, he promised his disciples they would not be left alone and so on Pentecost he sent the Holy Spirit. It is a down payment of what is to come. The Bible even speaks of marriage in its finest form as a model of the marriage of Jesus and the Church triumphant.

God created mankind in his own image: an image of relationship of one God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are meant to be in relationship with God and neighbour as summarized in the summary of the great commandments.

At the end of the sixth day: "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." (Gen. 1: 31a)

Stewardly tip: Human resources. Whether you are a director or manager, a foreman, a lead hand, chairperson, committee chair, a team leader, a teacher or other position of authority over others, consider how you encourage those under your leadership. People need to be affirmed and respected even when corrected and directed. Sometimes we are more caring stewards of our possessions than we are of our "people" resources. It seems to me that our Pastors receive much criticism that is not helpful or respectful. Helpful criticism is done with love, integrity and a great deal of care, respect and affirmation.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: Day 7 – Sabbath

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca



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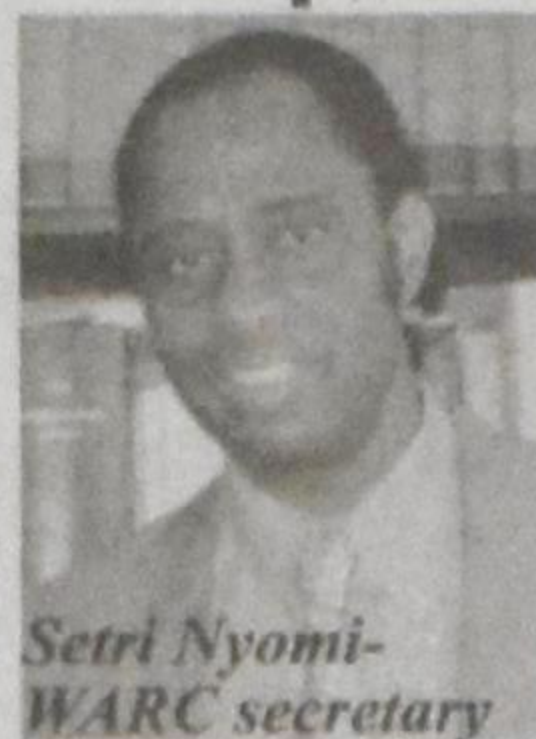
Native churches accept challenge to bring healing to strife-torn Kenya

'Be part of the healing of your nation,' Reformed Kenyans urged

CHOGORIA, Kenya (WARC) – "People of faith in Kenya today must do everything possible to be part of the healing," the general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches told 400 leaders of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa during a Bible study at their recent General Administration Committee meeting at Chogoria.

Reflecting on recent events in Kenya in which more than 1,200 people were killed during post-election violence, Setri Nyomi asserted that it is a challenge for every Christian to value their Christian identity over their ethnic identity.

"Any time that we let our ethnic identity or any other characteristics take the place of our identity as the people of God, we are yielding to the temptation the biblical people of



Setri Nyomi-
WARC secretary

Israel were warned about – making ethnic entity into a god to be worshipped," the WARC secretary said.

Nyomi was in Kenya from April 16 to 20 meeting with the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and the Reformed Church of East Africa. He challenged the leaders of the two churches to bring their resources together for the healing and reconciliation of the country. They accepted the challenge.

'Enemies' come together

The two churches work in communities which are on opposite sides of the violent conflicts taking place in Kenya since the disputed 2007 elections, therefore Nyomi believes their collaboration will go a long way towards setting up a process of healing and reconciliation.

Nyomi was briefed by senior officials of the All Africa Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches of Kenya and the Africa Peace Forum. He also visited one of the camps for displaced persons in Eldoret and spoke with both

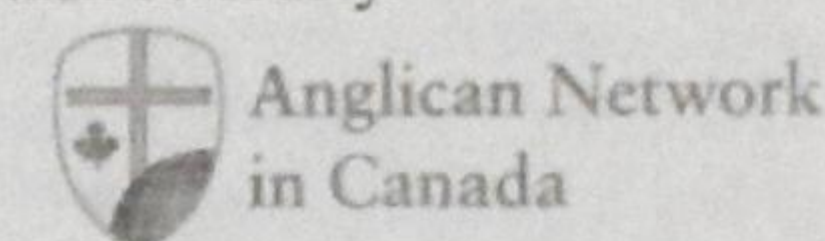
young people and adults affected by the violence.

His visit coincided with the swearing in of the new cabinet of the government of Kenya. The new cabinet came about as a result of the power sharing agreement brokered by the former United Nations general secretary, Kofi Anan.

"The churches in Kenya have a major challenge in this era," Nyomi said upon his return to Geneva. "The power sharing and the addressing of injustices has begun. The churches have a responsibility to accompany the process in a manner that holds political leaders accountable. Beyond that, they have an even greater responsibility: to address the deep hurts and wounds that have surfaced as a result of the recent violence, and their underlying causes."

Nyomi concluded, "That work of healing and reconciliation has to be taken up by people in the religious communities, and I pray that our member churches, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and the Reformed Church of East Africa, will be among those who take this task seriously."

Biblically faithful Canadian Anglicans want to be 'compelled by Christ's love'



Marian Van Til

VANCOUVER – North American members of the worldwide Anglican Communion who want to remain "biblically faithful" and "historically authentic" Anglicans were buoyed on April 25-26 by the pastoral words they heard and the fellowship they experienced at the national conference of the Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC).

Network churches describe themselves as those who "wish to be recognized as in 'full communion' with the biblically faithful global Anglican Communion." They "find themselves in 'serious theological dispute' with their bishop, diocese or the Anglican Church of Canada and are considering whether they can remain under the jurisdiction of a church which has 'walked apart' from the global Anglican Communion and historic Christianity."

Biblical math

Conference-goers considered what it means to be "Compelled by Christ's Love." Archbishop Gregory Venables of the Southern Cone (Argentina and most of South America) challenged them to "go deeper" in their walk with Christ. That must include "to anticipate and accept suffering as a normal part of the Christian life." Venables said, "If we choose faithfulness and obedience God can use us in the building of his Kingdom. The Christian life is not *humanly* possible, but when we are faithful, God is able to perform the miraculous."

"When we reach the end of our resources, Jesus can transform the difficulty into opportunity," assured Venables. Drawing from

the gospel account of Jesus commanding the disciples to feed a vast multitude with a few loaves and fishes – "You give them something to eat," Jesus initially told them – Venables reintroduced his listeners to "Biblical math." He pointed out that "overwhelming need + meager resources + a handful of inadequate disciples + JESUS = miraculous solution + great opportunity for Kingdom-building." Venables' final challenge was to "get on with it!"

Digging wells

In responding to a question about leaving the church from someone still in the Anglican Church of Canada Venables said, "If they are serving healthy food, go and eat there. If the food makes you ill, don't eat there." When asked about church growth and "sheep stealing" he repeated what he had been told by Anglican dissenters in Australia: "We don't build fences, we dig wells."

Reacting to Venables' address, Dr. J.I. Packer, well-known theology professor (Regent College) in the historic Calvinist-Anglican tradition, focused on the need for deeper understanding of the Bible among ordinary church-goers so that they are "less vulnerable to false teaching and heresy."

Bishop Albert Vun of the Diocese of Sabah, Borneo, Malaysia, spoke of the need to be committed to discipleship and missions. He reminded listeners that God cuts off dead branches and prunes the live branches so that they will produce more fruit.



Young people don't need more entertainment

Ken Moser, youth minister at St John's Shaughnessy, the large Vancouver church that left the Anglican Church of Canada last year, told conference-goers that most church youth experts have now determined that youth ministry is a "dismal failure." Young people are entertained but not disciplined, and thus they fall away from the church. But young people today are desperate for meaning, for community, for involvement and for adult involvement in their lives, Moser said. "They don't need more entertainment, more programming, more pleasure and stimulation. Effective youth ministry is not about quantity, but quality. It's about discipling the youth already in your church so they can reach their friends."

When Bishop Bill Atwood of the Province of Kenya spoke he presented four biblically based instructions, one or more of which would apply in a specific person's situation:

1. Cry out to God and ask him to supply a spiritual mentor, a Paul, in your life.
2. Look for a Timothy, someone whose life you can speak to and disciple.
3. Find a Barnabas who will walk with you and encourage you through the dark days.
4. Ask God for a Silas, a person who will speak truth and correction into your life – a prophet. And if you yourself are that truth speaker, ensure that it comes from a humble heart, not a "gotcha" or judgmental attitude.

Three myths our culture cherishes

Rev David Short, meanwhile, "unpacked" 1 Corinthians 15 – the passage from which the conference theme "Compelled by Christ's love" was drawn. Short said that North American culture holds three myths as true: pluralism (all religions offer some truth); tolerance (you must accept my position or you aren't accepting me); and human rights (the supremacy of individual rights). Only the gospel of Jesus has the power to dethrone these myths, Short said.

The gospel is Christ-centred (Christological), scripturally-based (from Genesis to Revelation the focus is *gospel*), theological (the heart-breaking grace of God), cosmic (universal and eternal), and personal. And the Gospel is *non-negotiable*; it encompasses judgement and salvation. He reminded his listeners: "Everything we do that is firmly rooted in the gospel will last for eternity."

The ANiC logo (beside the title of this article) incorporates key elements from logos of two orthodox Anglican organizations, Anglican Essentials (the green cross and Canadian maple leaf) and Common Cause Partners (the globe). "The elements all have important meaning and nicely tie together our past and our future," says ANiC.

Episcopal head chides dissenting bishop

Marian Van Til, with files from *Christian Post*

FORT WORTH, Texas – Episcopal Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori has protested a meeting between Archbishop Gregory Venables and clergy from a diocese that has voted to split from The Episcopal Church (U.S.). Venables is head of the biblically orthodox Anglican Province of the Southern Cone in South America.

Venables was recently invited by Jack Iker, Bishop of the Diocese of Fort Worth, to discuss issues affecting the diocese and the global Anglican Communion which has been wracked by division.

However, when Schori got wind of the invitation she told Venables in a letter "not to bring further discord into The Episcopal Church." She called the meeting "an unprecedented and unwarranted invasion of, and meddling in, the internal affairs of this province."

Last November the Diocese of Fort Worth approved leaving The Episcopal Church (TEC) and will again vote

later this year to finalize the withdrawal.

Bishop Iker of Fort Worth expressed shock over what he called Schori's "rude letter." He said, "Far from being 'an unwarranted interference,' he [Venables] is coming at my request as an honored visitor and guest speaker."

Over the past year, Schori and Iker have exchanged letters about Fort Worth's vote to leave TEC. Schori's office says she has worked for reconciliation. Iker says otherwise. "There are no efforts at reconciliation proceeding within this province, which is one reason why faithful people continue to leave TEC in droves," he said.

The Southern Cone has 22,000 members across Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. Last November, its provincial synod agreed to welcome into the province "on an emergency and pastoral basis" Episcopal Church dioceses "taking appropriate action to separate from The Episcopal Church." The Episcopal Church is the U.S. arm of Anglicanism.

Church

Indian state enacts anti-conversion law

GUJARAT (GFA)—Missionaries in Gujarat, India, may now face up to three years in prison if they are convicted of “forcibly converting” someone to Christianity. Believers across the state are concerned that the law will open doors for anti-Christian extremists to falsely accuse them of illegal practices.

“Our missionaries are trusting that the Lord will take care of them in this difficult time,” said K.P. Yohannan, founder and president of Gospel for Asia. “Several states in India have enacted these types of laws, but the love of Christ is still going out.”

The state’s legislative assembly passed the Gujarat Religious Freedom Act, an anti-conversion law, in 2003. But it remained dormant until April 1 this year, when rules for its implementation were finally formalized.

Now, if someone responds to the Gospel, the missionary must submit a completed form to the government, which includes detailed information about the person changing his or her religion. Also, the person who is “converting” must report to the government 30 days before any “conversion ceremony” — an event such as baptism.

If religious workers do not comply with these rules, they will



face criminal charges. However, Hindus are exempt from the stipulations of the new law, leaving many to believe that it is targeting Christians and Muslims.

New ways to persecute

The state’s legislative assembly tried to get the rules for the law framed in March. But Governor Nawal Kishore Sharma declared the amendment unconstitutional because it “violated Article 25 of the (Indian) constitution, which guarantees to all citizens to freely profess, practice and propagate any religion.” The March amendment also included Jains and Buddhists as part of the Hindu religion. Now, in the new law, the two religions are considered separate.

Christians are concerned that the law will provide new ways for anti-Christian extremists to persecute them through false accusations. They are also worried that the needy will suffer, because charitable work could be construed as bribery for people to “convert” to Christianity.

“Please pray that our missionaries and other Christian workers in Gujarat will have wisdom and strength from the Lord,” urges K.P. Yohannan. “Also lift up those who want to persecute the believers, that they will come to Jesus in a personal way.”

Rights tribunal rebukes Christian ministry for firing lesbian employee

Marian Van Til, with files from the K-W Record and EFC

KITCHENER, Ont.—A Christian ministry to handicapped people has been ordered in a one-man decision by the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal to get rid of its “prohibitive” employment contract and to compensate an employee dismissed because she is a lesbian. Christian Horizons is, in its own words, “an evangelical ministry seeking to reach out with Christian love to people with disabilities.”

Founded in 1964, it now has 2,500 employees in Ontario operating 180 residential homes for about 1,400 developmentally disabled people. Its employment contract asks employees to agree to an evangelical statement of faith and to a code of Christian conduct, a “Lifestyle and Morality Statement” based on biblical principles; all employees willingly sign it.

Violates basic rights

The provincial tribunal ruled that Christian Horizons violated the rights of Connie Heintz, 39, and must compensate her \$23,000 (plus interest), including \$5,000 for “the wilful and reckless infliction of mental anguish.” The ministry’s policies violate workers’ basic human rights, insisted adjudicator Michael Gottheil.

In 2000, Heintz, a five-year employee who grew up a Menonite, told management that she was involved in an ongoing lesbian relationship, in violation of her own beliefs for 30 years and of the agreement she had signed. She was offered Christian counseling in her own tradition to try to help her determine whether she could return to complying with the contract she

had signed. She declined. She then resigned and contacted the Human Rights Tribunal.

Misunderstands the nature of religion

Heintz, however, says the agency forced her out in September 2000 because of her sexual orientation, and Gottheil, ruling for the tribunal, agreed. Besides paying Heintz, Christian Horizons must begin basic human-rights training for all employees and adopt an “anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policy.”

Adrian Miedema, lawyer for Christian Horizons, says he and the ministry are reviewing the tribunal’s decision and have the possibility for appeal.

In an online editorial (www.christianity.ca) first published in the *National Post*, Don Hutchinson, general legal counsel of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, wrote:

At no time was the Christian identity of this ministry hidden from government funders, staff, residents or their parents. In fact, the Evangelical nature of Christian Horizons was an appealing feature to government, parents and staff in considering the needs of those placed into care. A representative from the Ministry of Community and Social Services testified that “Christian Horizons was an agency with a particular willingness and ability to accept some of the most challenging placements.”

The Ontario Human Rights Tribunal’s finding that Christian Horizons be required to abandon its statement of faith and its Lifestyle and Morality Statement does, as Mr. Gottheil noted, go to the very identity of this valued community partner.

Gujarat: ‘Soul of India’

Gujarat has been called the “Soul of India.” Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of India’s freedom movement, was born in Gujarat and spent his early years there. The name is derived from Gujaratta, meaning “the land ruled by the Gujurs.” The name appeared in written records as early as 942 A.D. Today this Indian state has 50 million inhabitants, nearly 17 million more than all of Canada.

The history of this state on the Indian west coast dates back more than 4,000 years to the Indus Valley civilization. Since then it has faced a Greek incursion, Muslim rule, European influence from Portuguese, Dutch and English explorers, invasions from neighboring states, and British control — before becoming part of independent India. The modern-day state of Gujarat was formed in 1960.

Christians vastly outnumbered

Hindus make up the largest religious group with 89.4 per cent, followed by Muslims (8.9 per cent), Jains (1.2 per cent) and Christians (0.5 per cent).

Though the area has a long history of missionary work — Franciscans arrived in Gujarat before 1500 — today’s church is comprised of mostly nominal Christians, with a few belonging to small evangelical groups. Divisions, compromises with pagan religions and lack of outreach all have drained life from the Body of Christ. Saurashtra, Gujarat’s western peninsula in the Arabian Sea, has around 12 million people, of whom only 0.07 per cent are Christian. This is the most unreached area in the state.

Lately Gujarat has become a focal point for the persecution of Christians (*see related story on this page*). Religious extremist groups, with the support of the local fundamentalist political party, have pursued a strategy of intimidation, slander and harassment of Christians, especially those from Dalit or tribal communities.

Gospel for Asia, founded by India native K.P. Yohannan to bring the gospel throughout Asia by means of native missionaries, began its work in Gujarat in 1995. Today it plants churches, operates Bible schools, slum ministries, a film ministry, outreach to Muslims, and sends out radio broadcasts in five languages: Gujarati, Hindi, Sindhi, Urdu and Marathi.

In falsely concluding that we should be treated as a garden-variety social-service provider rather than a group engaged in religious ministry, Mr. Gottheil pretzels his way through earlier decisions of human rights tribunals and the courts that would disagree with his conclusion.

Christian service of others is an integral extension of the Evangelical Christian faith. The attempt to sever that link is to misunderstand the nature of religion and undermine the very ethos that undergirds Christian Horizons’ expression of care and compassion for others. Ultimately, it serves to undermine the supply of loving ministry to those who would benefit most from its provision.

900 people still going to church six months after ‘Back to Church Sunday’ in UK — Canada will join the movement this year

LONDON (Christian Today) — Six months after a “Back to Church Sunday” evangelistic campaign in Britain, figures from the Church of England’s Diocese of Lichfield show that between 700 and 900 of the 6,000 non-churchgoers in the diocese who returned to church now regularly attend church. A further 3,000 people are still in some contact with their local church. In all, 20,000 people went back to church across Britain in 2007 as a result of the campaign.

The figures were released recently by the Archdeacon Bob Jackson of Walsall, on the same day it was announced that this year’s Back to Church Sunday will be run internationally.

Later in 2008 a number of Pentecostal churches and Anglican parishes in Canada and New Zealand will join 38 Church of England dioceses (including in Scotland and Wales) as well as Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed churches across Britain for another Back to Church Sunday. This year’s event

will occur on September 28.

Back to Church Sunday began in 2004 in one Anglican diocese (Manchester) with the message “Missing You.” It has gradually been spreading across England since then. By last year, 20 Church of England dioceses participated, and across the United Kingdom 20,000 people came back to church in one day.

Archdeacon Jackson says, “People invite their friends on Back to Church Sunday with no strings attached. We know many people will gladly respond to this. What we’ve proved is that up to 15 per cent like it so much they want to come back for good. This year we want to work hard on improving our welcome even more.”

Meanwhile, Britain’s Baptist Union, which represents more than 2,000 churches, is now also promoting Back to Church Sunday across Britain after trying it last year in the northwest

part of the UK.

“We are delighted to be part of Back to Church Sunday,” says Baptist Union head Ian Bunce. “We believe the concept of a personal invitation really works. For people to have the opportunity to try church again with a friend is a great concept.”

Participating churches receive a Back to Church pack containing invitations, posters, prayer cards, balloons, welcome team t-shirts and “friendly feedback” cards for newcomers. Participating parishes and denominations are additionally supported with multimedia training resources which are used in “welcome workshops” over the summer.

Weekly church attendance among adults in the UK dropped to as low as three per cent of the population in the 1970s. By 2008 it had risen to about 10 per cent, still clearly very low when it is considered that 53 per cent of the population calls itself Christian.

Nature

Flowers & Thistles

Curt Gesch



Possessing the land

Text: Psalm 37

Other references: Jonah 4:11; Zechariah 8:4; Matthew 5:5

To all you who believe that God created the world, and all that "in them is", I ask this: How do you like the weather we've had this year?

Everybody talks about the weather, some liking it hot, some liking it not. Personally, I get quite tired of the "weather" as a topic of conversation when one might be talking about justice, righteousness, faith, joy, peace, labour, rest, love and hate, war and peace. . . etc.

On the other hand, there is a sense in which living right here, in this weather, where God has placed us (like it or not) means that talking about the weather is really God-affirming. Those who believe this world is governed by impersonal forces, made by some strange quirk of fate: these people must find talking about weather a little different.

I guess what I am after is this: Talking about weather may really be silly or trivial if what we are doing is avoiding more important topics. Or it may be entertainment: I must confess that a "weather channel" makes no more sense to me than a "sports channel" or a "shopping channel" or – for that matter – a "Christian channel."

Either we believe everything in this world and the next is from God, by God, and for God, or we think it is something else – a place for us to mark time, or a place for us to achieve some sort of happiness, or a place for us to endure stoically.

But maybe talking about weather means that we are, in a sense, talking to God about life in his world. We are saying, "We need rain for our crops, which are really your crops, Lord." We are saying, "I'm plumb worn out by winter and need some of the normal spring sunshine, Lord. Please help me." Or, "My friend's life depends on frost and hard ground so, Lord, please send seasonal frost so that logging can begin and end on time."

This brings us to the whole topic of what is called "Earth Day." It is quite embarrassing that it has been, for the most part, secular environmentalists; worshippers of Gaia, the supposed earth mother; new agers; and a new breed of scientist. . . . It is these people that are really pushing what is called Earth Day.

With the notable exceptions of organizations such as A Rocha, the Au Sable Institute in Michigan, and Calvinistic earth environmentalists like Dr. Calvin De Wit of the University of Wisconsin, Christians have been markedly silent.

Sometimes they have embraced an internalized Christianity that denigrates things of earth as worldly. It is also quite common today to hear famous Christians arguing about whether Al Gore's statistics are cor-

rect, while avoiding his central issue. Some Christians emphasize the "pilgrim" nature of our walk (a la John Bunyan) to the extent of ignoring the plight of God's world. Some Christians are so concerned about their view of the rapture that they can't be bothered with a creation from which they'll soon be rescued.

Psalm 37, a magnificent teaching psalm, has lots to say about the righteous and the wicked, about commitment and anger and worry. But did you notice a phrase that describes the final outcome, the if you will, of the righteous?

John Stek's comments in the Study Bible footnotes puts it this way: "The central issue addressed is: Who will 'inherit the land' (verses 9, 11, 22, 29), i.e., live on to enjoy the blessings of the Lord in the Promised Land?"

Let's read those verses again?

Does this refrain remind you of anything our Lord said? (Matthew 5:5)

["The meek will inherit the earth."]

*The meek shall inherit the earth
with leprous arms
clawing in the junk and garbage
dying forever dim-eyes,
hairless,
with a half-life of eternity
in the thick blood-red mid-day
they shall remember . . .
. . . they shall remember
the bomb-droppers flame-throwers
white collar murderers
champions of progress
two-car TV plastic people;
they shall remember them
in their bombastic heaven
and give them as gift
for their eternal feast
this decrepit beast of earth,
before slipping off meekly somewhere
to inherit a more restful,
a more blessed,
death.*

David Toews

- Old Testament and New are united in their assumption that God's creation was good (Genesis 1: 31).
- God talks about a restored creation (cf. Isaiah 65), not annihilation of creation. (Hymn #331 says, "a renewed creation" – we just sang it!)
- That last remarkable verse of Jonah (4: 11) reminds Jonah that God, amazingly to some of us, is not only a God showing mercy, pity, and love for the 120,000 Ninevites, but "also much cattle". Here "cattle" means "animals."

My favourite critic of the scriptures asks this question: "What does God give man 'dominion' in Genesis? Isn't that just asking people to abuse the creation, cause and ignore pollution?"



One of my answers is, of course, a reference to stewardship, taking care of the world on behalf of God.

But my testimony would be much stronger if I show him how to live in this world. How we live in the earth that we possess, have dominion over, care for, from our Father.

But I'm really not going to go here and tell you to, re-use, and recycle one more time. I'm not so concerned with environmental as in the art and style and awareness of our lives.

How do we live in God's world?

- Do you rush around in cars that seal you off from people and wildlife?
- Do you keep your hands clean and your yards weedless with this or that gadget or do you remember that you are, in fact, made of the same soil as exists right there?
- Do you have time to meditate – just sit – and hear what God is saying to you through what we call his natural revelation?
- Do you learn tenacity from chickweed and dandelions?
- Do you learn about faithfulness by the return of the white-crowned sparrows?
- Does contemplating mellow soil bring forth a doxology from you? Is "building soil" one of every year's gardening and farming goals?
- Are you snowboarding like a maniac down a hill, too fast to see the marten tracks, too fast to be feeding a whiskey jack from your hand?
- Can you hear wind-rustle, bird-song, frog-croak, or water rushing from your quad, motorboat, motorbike or 4WD vehicle?
- Can you meditate on what the sun is telling you (Psalm 19) while blasting the silence and climbing the Onion in your (power) sled?
- Do you actually live where God placed you? Or do you hermetically seal yourself off from much of his world with headsets, video games, cell phones, Blackberry's,



and other walls. ("Bloom where you're planted" is a good slogan, but I sometimes wonder if container gardening is more like the way human beings live.)

- Is weather, after all something important to talk about, or just a way to pass the time?

Anyone who remembers Mr. Sak must remember how much he loved heat, how much he loved soil, how much dumb-cluck chickens meant to him. In my opinion, Mr. Sak, a refugee – a pilgrim and stranger, you might say – was a powerful testimony about the land called Telkwa.

So how about it? Does this cry from Wordsworth apply to you?

*The world is too much with us, late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
. . . Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn. . .*

I suggest that instead of arguing about intelligent design, theories of the earth's beginnings, and theological interpretations of verses about creation, we spent some time talking about and meditating on our Christian testimony:

How can we live more consciously Deo, before the face of God in Telkwa, Evelyn, Smithers, Quick? How can we show others that we take God's world seriously, that we have a Saviour who has promised to renew

Continued on p. 15

Pentecost

The other Comforter

*And I will ask the Father,
and he will give you another Counselor
to be with you forever*

John 14:16

Abraham Kuyper

Among all the Christian celebrations the least well known, understood or enjoyed is the feast of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is a truly 'spiritual' feast and offers few details for our imagination.

Christmas offers many stories to share with your children. There is the baby in the manger, the shepherds with the lambs, the angels and wise men, the visit to the Temple and the flight to Egypt, to name just a few. Similarly, on Easter, one can imagine the sorrowful women visiting the grave, the lonely wandering of Mary Magdalene, the angels at the open grave, the travellers to Emmaus, Jesus' entry through closed doors, and a doubting Thomas invited to place his finger in Jesus' side.

These details stir our imaginations. They provide lots of material for discussions, and art can be produced to portray these events in drawings and paintings.

They provide movement, change and a wealth of variety of figures which come alive in our imagination and also for our congregation.

Pentecost provides a very different scenario. Now we find people in and outside an upper room. There is a strange sound, unusual flashes of light, speech that sounds confused, but which nevertheless breaks through language barriers, and the climax of a sermon praising God's great deeds.

These details usually don't inspire our imagination. There are no grand events to be portrayed by artists, and it is difficult for our children to grasp. It offers little material for splendid sermons. Portrayal of Pentecost in the arts ends mostly in failure.

But, we hasten to add, it had to be that way. Pentecost is not less in value than Christmas or Easter, because its spiritual focus places it beyond the reach of our common imagination.

Pentecost is the most noble of the three feast days, but only for those who have tasted the noble gifts of the Lord in the outpouring of his Spirit. Only those who have received the "first fruit of the Spirit" [Rom. 8:23] can truly rejoice on this feast day of the Spirit.

When Jesus speaks about the Spirit, whom he will send us from the Father, he calls him *another Comforter*. This means that the Son thinks also of himself as a Comforter, but one who would remain only for a while and then leave again. That's why he promised that they would receive *another* Comforter, different from himself. This new Comforter would not leave, but would remain with them forever.

We must not think that the new Comforter came only to console the disciples who



Pentecost by Titian

would miss Jesus. That's not what Jesus meant and not what he said. To regard the Comforter as no more than a temporary substitute for Jesus demeans the Spirit, radically removes the blessing of Pentecost, and robs God the Holy Spirit of his honour.

For the Holy Spirit too is God. He is not a power, light, or gift, but a divine Person.

His majesty is nothing less than that of the Son, for he is equal to the Son in glory and timelessness. There is nothing temporal about his presence, for he shares the eternal being with the Son and the Father.

Clearly, the Son comes first and the Spirit comes after him to 'comfort' the Father's children.

But can one 'comfort' those who rejoice; 'comfort' those who do not mourn; 'comfort' those who do not admit to their sorrow, nor even recognize the misery that surrounds them like a stream? And, indeed, what do the common multitudes, or even the confessing multitudes know about their 'misery'?

For most people 'misery' comes when things go wrong, when they struggle with worry or illness, when they lose some possession or, worse, when they lose someone who is close to them through death.

That's why they love the confession that

their 'Father in Heaven' fills their pantry, restores their health, and comforts them in their final days.

For those who live on a deeper level, 'misery' comes from the pressures of a sinful life. Their conscience afflicts them, and they are tormented by the question of 'where they might spend eternity'. They do not live out of love but in fear, and this fear drives them to accept the salvation of the cross, confess the Son who saved them from their sins through his death on that cross, and who also opened the heavens when he rose from the grave.

That's as far as they go. What more could they ask for?

A 'two-in-one' God as Father and Son would be much simpler for them to worship and adore, than the marvel of the triune God as he is worshipped by all who reflect more intently on the mystery. For such 'two-in-one' teaching is like a tree trunk without roots, like the mumbling of unintelligible words. It is not a dogma of the church, for dogma means conscious reflection on the Eternal One, and deserves the name only when it is practised in the very depth of our soul and being. To know God, the Eternal One as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; to re-

joice in him and enjoy him who first loved us – such is the true, sincere and God-inspired confession of the Trinity. Such faith can not be destroyed by logic or doubt.

To arrive at such a point we must understand the 'misery' for which the Comforter is sent, as something more than for the pain of a personal setback, or an attack of conscience, or even the fear of hell.

No, to understand the true misery, the depth of sorrow and divine focus of work for the Comforter we must turn to the theme of Divine Love.

God is Love. That's why God's work on earth does not rest until 'love' is the law for life in his kingdom. Indeed, the grandest imagination cannot begin to guess the glory we will experience once the waters of eternal love fall on us as a stream to drench all that have eternal life.

God is Love. That's why even in our feeble imitations in marriage, friendship or sexual intimacy we can yet see a kernel of the all encompassing power of the divine love of God.

The Eternal One is Love. That's why nothing strokes the ego and encourages us more in sin, selfishness and depravity than to be honoured, praised, loved and admired.

He is Love. We arrive at a deeper level of understanding and a real awareness of sin when our souls are torn because we disappoint that love. There is no real sorrow over a personal setback unless we also grieve at the sorrow we have caused him who loves us.

And likewise there is also no true faith and devotion, unless it turns to the love of the Holy One, and finds there an indescribable, irresistible and gripping desire to be near unto God, and to take shelter in his tabernacle.

Do you understand misery to be anything like that?

We are not asking about full comprehension, but just a little understanding, and some longing for his inscrutable ways. Not a longing for a new heaven and earth, but for the One who sits enthroned there, the source of all heavenly blessings. Do you know anything about that?

We are not talking about a passionate imagination, or emotional expression, not even about intense feelings of ecstasy. We mean a calm quiet deep consciousness which will show you with increasingly greater clarity the drought in your own heart, the need of your own passions and the pain of your inner self. This will teach and correct you, indicating what is lacking, what is the foundation and origin of your all consuming misery. This is the misery which you have hardly recognized as such.

Then you will find laughter among your tears, my brothers and sisters, because that is the sign and proof of the love that 'has already been poured out into your heart'. It

See Ascended p. 13

Excerpt

Answered prayer



This excerpt is taken from the early chapters of Peter Slofstra's book, **In Tandem: a sea to sea cycling odyssey**.

The preceding chapters describe preparations, purchasing bikes and Marja's unfortunate accident in which she broke her wrist. She had resigned herself to riding along in one of the support vehicles when a new possibility came to them.

Peter is pastor of Hope Fellowship Church in Courtice, Ontario. His book **In Tandem** can be ordered at www.essencebookstore.com

Peter Slofstra

Who knows what sparks a great idea? In our case, a lighthearted comment suggested a solution that gave new life to Marja's shattered dream.

One Sunday after church she told several women that she had resigned herself to riding in a SAG wagon until her wrist became strong enough to try cycling again. One of the women joked, "What you need is a bicycle built for two!"

As we drove home she told me about this conversation. I felt an instant jolt of adrenalin as the idea took hold. "I know she was joking," I said, excited. "But why not? Her joke could be the answer to our prayers!"

That very same Sunday I went on the Internet and began researching tandem bicycles. I quickly learned that a tandem bike would cost more than our two new road bikes combined. But then I thought of George, an experienced cyclist who was part of our Saturday morning running group and a fellow Sea to Sea registrant. He also happened to be the president of the International Christian Cycling Association, and I thought if anybody would have a lead on an affordable tandem, it would be him. Because of his inquisitive mind, broad range of knowledge and limitless fascination with all things scientific, I thought of him as "Curious George."

I called him, and he immediately offered us the use of his own tandem bike. "Custom-made," he said. "My wife and I have taken it everywhere, including Europe. You're welcome to use it all summer if it works for you." A free tandem! I thought. Custom-made, no less!

By now Marja's arm had been in a cast for four weeks. We had finally resigned ourselves to the fact that she was not physically able to cycle. Her only chance, although a slim one, was to pedal on the back of a tandem bike, leaving the steering, gearing and braking to me.

We found George at his home in Pickering, located on a marshy, reed-filled bay on Lake Ontario. "Look for the sailboat in the driveway," he had told us, making it easy to locate his house. His wife seemed tiny beside her 6-foot 4-inch tall husband.

George took us to his garage and rolled out their big yellow bike with orange lettering and drop handlebars, which I immediately

nicknamed "Big Yellow Taxi" after Joni Mitchell's song. He invited Marja to sit on the second saddle, gave her a few instructions — "Lift both feet onto the pedals while I balance the bike. Lean with me. Let me take the lead"—and off they went around the block. I watched them disappear and return within five minutes. If Marja was anxious she didn't show it.

"Your turn, Peter. We'll try you on the back so that you know what it will be like for Marja." I hopped on board, lifted my feet onto the pedals and felt that helpless, insecure feeling that comes with giving total control to someone else. Perched on the back, I caught George's rhythm and leaned into the curves as we circled his neighbourhood.

"Now let's see how the front seat fits," George said. I straddled the horizontal tube. There was no clearance at all. Even on my tiptoes my crotch touched the bar. When I eased myself up on the saddle while George balanced the bike, I barely reached the pedals. I felt like a little child sitting on an adult bike!

We tried dropping the seat to its lowest position, but it didn't help. "The bike's too big, George! It doesn't fit," I said, very disappointed.

"Take it with you," he suggested, unwilling to give up. "You can make some further adjustments. It may be just a matter of getting used to it."

Back home I tried everything to make it work: different bike shoes with thicker soles, different headsets and seat posts. We even took the bike to a mechanical engineer in our church, but he shook his head and said, "It's complicated, Peter. We're looking at a lot of effort with very little guarantee that it will even work."

I puzzled over the problem of making the bike fit as I worked on my sermons, counselled people and sat through meetings. Subconsciously I was constantly busy trying to figure out a way to make George's tandem fit us.

One day another option presented itself when we visited our daughter and granddaughter in St. Catharines and dropped by a local bike store. We told the owner that we were exploring the possibility of going across Canada on a tandem now that Marja's wrist was broken and asked him what he thought. He was already aware of the tour after outfitting several Sea to Sea cyclists, including our long-time good friend Henry Swinkels, an architect and a member with us on the tour's



spiritual support team.

"Listen," the owner of the store said. "I have a tandem, a four-year-old Trek with a medium frame. It's a bit big for me, but it might be the right size for both of you."

"How much?" I asked hesitantly, afraid to hear the answer.

"I could sell it to you for \$2,000. It's worth close to \$4,000 new."

Two thousand dollars! "We're just beginning to think about the idea of using a tandem," I explained. "Could you contact us before selling it to someone else?"

Back in Courtice I reluctantly gave up on the idea of using George's yellow tandem bicycle. It would not fit us, no matter how much I wished that it would.

Providentially, I had promised to perform a wedding ceremony back in St. Catharines on the May long weekend. I gave the bike shop owner a call and set up an appointment. Hesitantly, I again broached the subject of cost. "Would you take less?" I finally dared to ask, hoping for a good bargain. "This tour will now cost us much more than we figured on."

"Another customer showed some interest in the bike, and I researched the price more carefully. I told him \$1,800. How does that sound?" he said. I told him that it sounded good.

"I'll have the bike ready for you on Saturday," he promised.

He was as good as his word. We arrived at his shop at 9 a.m. and he was already there, wheeling out the bike. The day was perfect, not only for a wedding but also for a test ride. After a few pointers he invited me to take a few turns on the parking lot. When I came to a stop I grinned and shouted, "It fits! This is great!" But would Marja feel the same?

"You're the captain," the store owner said to me, giving us an impromptu lesson in riding a tandem bicycle. Then, turning to Marja as she stood waiting, he said, "And you're what's known as the stoker. Now get on the seat and put both of your feet on the pedals while Peter straddles the bike and holds it steady. Okay. Does that feel all right?"

Marja nodded yes. "Now you say, 'On,'" he continued.

"On," Marja said.

"Next, put the pedals in the start position and say, 'Set.'"

"Set."

"Good. Now Peter, with your lead foot in the set position, count out loud, 'one, two, three' and on 'three' both of you push down on your pedals and away you'll go."

I counted the numbers out loud, and on "three" we took off with an ease we could not have imagined after our struggles with George's tandem. Carefully, we circled the parking lot several times.

When we stopped for some final instructions we were beaming. "You guys look great together. No problem at all," he said approvingly. "Just a few more pointers. Peter, you have to communicate everything you're going to do. Say it out loud. One, two, three! Gearing! Coasting! Braking! Stopping! Bump ahead! And Marja, relax and work with him. Now, why don't you take the bike for the morning? I'll be here whenever you get back."

Off we went, cycling past the Welland Canal and through Port Dalhousie. We bicycled into the village of Jordan and through sweetly scented vineyards and orchards on a series of paved country roads. On a secluded road we tried a steep hill several times and practised shifting up and down through the gears. When we stopped to take a break I turned around and noticed tears in Marja's eyes. "Hey, you're crying? Are you all right?" I asked.

She glanced down at her left wrist resting on her handlebar in its cast and then looked at me with tear-filled eyes. "It works," she said. "I get to bike after all. Peter, it's really going to work!"

I like to say that God's answers fall into four categories: yes, no, not yet, and yes with a twist. This tandem seemed to be an answer that fit into the last category. Right then and there, we offered up a prayer of thanks for the unusual solution God had provided.

Returning to the shop, I asked, "Any doubts or second thoughts?"

"None," Marja answered.

We informed the owner about our decision and asked him to install a headlight; a disc brake for the mountainous descents ahead; and a bike computer capable of giving us trip and total distance, current speed, maximum speed and average speed. We also purchased extra spokes and tire tubes. "I can tell that you'll be good together on a tandem," he observed, bringing a smile to our faces. "There are lots of couples that I would advise against buying a tandem. But you two will do well."

Over the next three weeks we put 630 kilometres on our navy-blue tandem bicycle, which Marja christened "Big Blue." I e-mailed the good news to the task force and our tour manager, Ed Witvoet:

Wanted you to know that we purchased a four-year-old Trek tandem and we're loving it. The bike is a perfect fit. So there you are, Ed. You'll have a tandem on the tour, and the stoker will be someone with her

Excerpt

wrist in a cast.

"That's excellent news!" Ed wrote back. "I'm happy for both of you. It all seems very providential!"

A few days later Ed told me, "I always hoped that we would have at least one tandem on the tour."

"You got your wish, Ed," I replied, "but it took Marja's broken wrist to get it."

Big Blue's speed surprised us. Hill climbing was definitely harder, but the downhill runs were exhilarating. One morning, for example, we were thrilled when we hit 68 km/h pedalling furiously down a long hill. It was nowhere near the 94 km/h that George had once reached with his wife on their yellow tandem, but it seemed incredibly fast to us!

As the start date drew near, there were some memorable training rides with unexpected dangers that strengthened us as a tandem team.

One morning, a tabby cat came out of a deep ditch, ready to cross the road right in front of us until Marja instinctively screamed, "Cat!" It crouched down at the sound of her voice and quickly spun around, fleeing back into the ditch as we cruised by at 39 km/h.

The following week a deer became trapped between a fence and the road we were on. Frightened, it sprinted beside us in the ditch searching for an escape, its white tail flashing. Our race with this panicked animal ended when we slowed down long enough to allow it to cross the road. The deer's hoofs slipped momentarily, clattering on the pavement, as it veered left at high speed. Regaining its footing, it reached the opposite side and fled into the woods, disappearing from sight.

Our closest call during training happened only one block from our home, putting to the test all of the evasive manoeuvres that we had

learned in a Can-Bike II course two weeks earlier. We had just turned onto our street when a pickup truck passed us and turned left into a driveway. Suddenly, without warning, the driver put the truck into reverse and began backing up into his own driveway directly in front of us on our side of the street. The driver was oblivious to our presence and about to hit us. In the split second before contact I wrenched the handlebars to the right and made our escape on the sidewalk. Behind us, the driver got out of his truck, still blissfully unaware of our close call.

"Unbelievable," I yelled, feeling upset. "Did you see how close that was? The guy never saw us, not once!" Then I asked, "Are you all right?"

"I'm fine," Marja calmly replied. "I just hung on and went along with whatever you needed to do."

This frightening experience left us feeling like students who had just passed a major exam. Despite its length, Big Blue could be trusted to respond quickly to unforeseen emergencies. Most importantly, Marja and I had responded as a team, with complete trust and reliance on each other. We were as ready as we would ever be.

One week before the tour we took Big Blue to Hamilton, where it was packed on board the Sea to Sea gear truck, which was leaving for Vancouver the following day. Two days later Marja had her cast removed. On the advice of the specialist we bought a brace to support and protect her atrophied wrist. As we drove home from the clinic she told me that she had chosen a Bible verse, Philippians 4:13, as her theme for the tour: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (NASB).

lamb, but to be cherished as the object of his love, like a friend loves a friend, or a lover adores his beloved; to live with the Eternal One a life in which he communes with them, and the self respond to him.

Of course they never experience the full depth of this love, but they are moved along by that stream, always moving away from what is visible with the naked eye, as they seek and focus on the Eternal One. But they could not find him. 'The world' always interfered. As did their life with its needs, its riches, its hustle and bustle. But far more interference came from the 'old self' shamelessly prostituting itself to other gods. Then they no longer recognized their own love for the Lord, and did not long for him anymore. They no longer called on him, nor did they pray. These are faithless believers, with only a show of sainthood.

That is a true life of misery, a life of a thousand deaths.

Such it was for the woman for whom "the children come to the point of birth, and there

Peter & Marja on the Sea-to-Sea Tour



Pentecost...continued from p. 11

was not yours by nature. The fatal wound brought on by the fall results in a life of 'misery' while we are blind to the real character of that misery. To feel the pain of love means that we have once again received such love. There is no salvation in 'the One who loved us first' unless this was followed by "the love of God poured into our hearts" [Rom 5:5].

Such an awakening of the pain of love is the work of the Lord throughout the ages, as he opens himself up to his chosen, his elect, and we may say even blessed because they are the "afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted" [Isa 54:11]. In their wretched state grace came to them and showed them God's initiative in bestowing his tender mercies.

In their experience of grace they knew once more that they again belonged to the eternal One. They were once more conscious of their need for God because they were created for the Holy One of Israel. Created, not to be consumed by him, like the sacrificial

is no strength to deliver them" [Isa 37:3].

For those who cling to superficial lifestyles, or those who live in terror that grips the heart at the thought of having to enter heaven and come face to face with the Eternal One, there is comfort in the knowledge that they will be reined in through chastisement. That is because their situation is unsustainable.

There are two fires raging, the one in front and one behind, to say nothing of the consuming fire within. Such persons are really highly favoured, so much so that the love of God is shed into their hearts. Love is the reason why the grace of God presents itself as a tempest, driving such people on and pushing them until they are too exhausted to endure it any longer.

The world opposes them; their own hearts accuse them, and sin and the devil dance a wicked dance around them to obtain their mortal soul.

If only their souls had wings, they could

fly away from this life full of temptations. It is in their power to do so, and they could take their own life in suicide. But there is a strict command against that as well. Once more they face a consuming fire. It is the grim revenge, which curses all suicides as an outrage, a shame, and a violation of God's holiness.

Walled in from all sides, there is no way out, no escape. There is nothing left but to submit without any comfort, being totally vulnerable to any evil power, which they cannot control, with only a prayer on their lips, "Oh that you might return; that there might be windows into heaven". They are 'Like a deer panting for water'.

Great is this thirst for the living Triune Holy God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Such thirsting cannot be quenched until all that obstructs and opposes or clouds the path has disappeared. It will be stilled only when there is no longer a 'world' to draw

Continued on p. 14

Corinthians

The grain in the fields is ripening

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:20

A. A. van Ruler

This verse is a cry in which Paul interrupts his own reasoning. He was busy laying out the consequences of denying Christ's resurrection. His conclusion was that then everything becomes futile, without content and meaningless, whether it is the preaching of the apostles, the faith of Christians, human life, or the existence of the world. All lose their meaning if Christ has not been raised from the dead.

"If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men" (v. 19).

But suddenly Paul disentangles himself from this web of gloomy consequences and stands up like an apostle to say: "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead!"

This is not something we can reason toward and prove; it can only be proclaimed. In 1 Cor. 15 Paul is not trying to prove the truth of Christ's resurrection. He simply points to Scripture and to the witness of the apostolate.

Christ was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures. That's Old Testament – it pulses throughout with the resurrection. It witnesses that God the Lord rules over life and death. He intervenes in the reality of our lost lives. And his help raises mankind out of all his corruption. God is not like fate, which in one way or another blows silently through all the phases of life and death. He is himself. He is the Lord. This Old Testament knowledge of God speaks fulsomely of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So Paul points to Scripture, that is, to the Old Testament.

But after that he also points to the apostolate. The apostles are the eye-witnesses to the risen Christ. He



appeared to his followers. He showed himself as alive to them. This was an act of his omnipotence and his election. By it those eye-witnesses are anointed to be apostles and to be part of the apostolic generation.

But these do not constitute a proof for the resurrection. Theirs is a proclamation of the resurrection. Both the Old Testament and the apostolic New Testament resound with one and the same witness: that the living God is a God who raises us from death and corruption, and that he has given us an unshakable sign of his power to do so in the resurrection of the One – Jesus Christ.

There is nothing to be proven here. Proof traps us in the sphere of probability and necessity. But Christ's resurrection contains nothing that is possible and also nothing that is of necessity. Everything about Christ's resurrection is only factual, reality, an act of God, and therefore also inconceivable. We can only live it.

But here in Christ is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. This reminds us of the Old Testament institution in which the first ripe grain of the harvest, held together in sheaves, were brought into the

temple. In the middle of the temple they were waved in every direction. The promise and the prophecy of the entire harvest was that the first ripe grain would wave over the whole country, over all the fields and all the homes.

In the same way, Jesus Christ is the firstfruits. He waves over all who have fallen asleep, over the realm of the dead, and over this earth, which is a valley of dry bones. Because of him and his resurrection, there is life and a future for mankind, for the world and for the earth.

We live under the waving of these firstfruits. We are the grain ripening in the fields, and the harvest is approaching. This world is not in vain. It produces fruit, but not by its own power. We do not of ourselves ripen for the harvest of the Kingdom of God. Of ourselves we ripen instead toward destruction. Death is the sign of the terrible lostness of our existence. But God is fully able to stand up to death and the lostness into which creation has fallen.

So there is a promise and a future for the world. In Christ God has demonstrated what he has in store for the earth and that he remains faithful to his creation.

Meanwhile, however, the grain is still in the fields. In fact, Paul sees the grain flattened by a storm, withered by the heat, or spoiled by rain. The world is the field, but it is a graveyard.

Paul doesn't call Christ the firstfruits of the living but of those who have fallen asleep.

We are still under the power of death and corruption. So we must have no illusions. Soberly and radically, we must admit that none of us can stand up to death and that we have been given only a handbreadth in the joyous light of life. But it is in this state, as those fallen asleep, as those subject to the corruption of death, that Christ is our firstfruits.

This means two things. First, that Christ is our only hope. If we mortals are to keep up our courage, we must see Christ. In him and in his resurrection God demonstrated his power. He alone has been rescued from the power of death and corruption. We not yet.

And secondly, it means that there is nothing in this world so dark and so opaque that we aren't called to have hope in it and for it. He is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. He waves over all death and corruption. His blessing and his prophetic word go out to his creatures in all their lostness. Even in death we can have hope in Christ!

Pentecost...continued from p. 13

it, nor 'time' to exhaust it, no sinful heart to distract, nor the Devil lurking in the darkness to lead us away from the one true God.

The thirsting child only finds what it seeks when there is no longer a 'partial commitment', when there are no threatening clouds, or coldness of flesh. Only when 'tomorrow' can no longer rob you of what 'yesterday' had given, will the soul possess loving admiration and true adoration.

For then your boundaries are no longer a boundary for the Holy One. You will be taken up into the congregation of the saints in heaven; and that congregation in turn is enfolded by the Mediator and by the Spirit pouring forth from the Mediator as the Head drenching his body. That Spirit draws you into himself, to live in you and to fulfill in you all that can be fulfilled with the fulness of God.

Now, that will not happen on earth. It does not even come to completion when we die. It will not be accomplished until that day when he returns in all his glory.

But the Merciful One does not leave it at that. He does not ignore the comfortless condition of his un comforted ones. For, after all, he is your Saviour! His name is Compassion. That's why he arranged for our salvation, and you, his blessed ones, who know the pain "of the love that was poured out into your hearts" [Rom. 5:5] will never be without a 'comforter', because he has sent the Comforter.

This same Comforter appeared to the Patriarchs in visions and appearances with judgements and divine messages.

The Israelites in the time of Moses noticed the robe of the Comforter rustling when the waters of the Red Sea parted, when the manna rained down from heaven, and when they saw him in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. This Comforter continued to appear to the people of the Lord in the symbols of his Holiness in the ark of the covenant, in the hand that saves them, in dreams and visions, and especially in the word of the prophets. When the era of shadows came to an end, the Son appeared, and every

soul that thirsted for God clung to him, and was comforted and blessed by experiencing his love. But he did not stay; the cross appeared, and their 'hearts were troubled again'. The souls of the believers shuddered like the leaves in the tops of the trees shudder in the night breezes. But then they heard the promise, "My dear children, I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" [John 14:16].

And then Pentecost came, and God himself descended into their hearts, to live in the congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He returned to the temple he had chosen, saying, "Here is the place of my rest" [cf. Isaiah 66:1]. That's when rest really came. A rest from our comfortless plodding. A foreshadowing of the eternal rest, which remains for the children of God.

Note: This is of a series of meditations by Abraham Kuyper translated by Jack van Meggelen

Family

A legacy of faith, hope and service

My paternal grandmother died 19 years ago, at age 81. This year marks the 100th anniversary of her birth. To honor her life and her legacy, one of my uncles is compiling a booklet of memories.

Grandma was one of seven children, born and raised on a farm in Austria.

She came to Canada in her early twenties, securing employment as a domestic worker until her marriage. Her first child, my father, was born in the middle of The Great Depression.

Grandma bore 13 children in all – ten more than I have. I'm amazed that she managed to ensure everyone's needs were met, especially without the many conveniences today's mothers take for granted.

She and Grandpa were still raising children when the grandkids began arriving.

Despite the sacrifices her life involved, Grandma was never known to complain. In fact, she used to remark how blessed she was to have so many children, all healthy (she'd lost two young siblings to illness). Eventually her grandchildren numbered thirty-three, and she had several great-grandchildren at the time of her death.

What I remember most about Grandma is the warm welcome – including a big hug – she would always give. When you showed up at her door, she made you feel you had just made her day.

The first thing you noticed upon entering her house was the large picture of Jesus on the wall.

Also of note were the dozens of photos of grandkids on display.

I don't recall many toys, but my siblings and I enjoyed playing with a big box of Lego. Grandma also kept a supply of crayons and colouring books in the kitchen table drawer. Everyone who completed a page would sign and date it.

Whenever we came to visit, Grandma would bring out tea and juice, cookies and mints. She always wanted to serve you something, regardless of the time of day.

One weekend, Grandma slept over while my parents went away. My sisters and I made apple strudel with her, clearing the kitchen table so we could roll out the dough. No strudel we've ever had compares to Grandma's mouth-watering recipe.

I also have special memories of a New Year's Eve spent with Grandma (by then widowed). At midnight we went out her back door and

came in through the front, for good luck. While outside, we spiritedly smashed saucers – old ones, also for luck – at Grandma's urging.

Grandma wasn't well enough to attend my wedding, so after the ceremony, on the way to the photo studio, my husband and I took a detour to visit her. The photographer was annoyed at this disruption to our carefully planned schedule, but I insisted on including my grandmother in our special day. We had several shots taken in her living room. These are the last pictures I have of Grandma, who died a few months later.

Grandma had a strong faith that God would take care of things. For example, an insurance salesman came to her door during a time when buying anything non-essential was out of the question. Grandma pointed to the picture of Jesus behind her and said, "He's my insurance." The Lord did not let her down.

As my aunt said at Grandma's 80th birthday celebration, "She'd be the first to admit that without her rich faith and trust in God's provision, she couldn't have cared for so many so well."

When asked for gift ideas for special occasions, Grandma would reply without hesitation that she didn't need anything. She was satisfied with living simply. If you insisted on giving a gift, she requested a donation to a charity that helped the poor. She placed everyone's needs above her own.

What a wonderful legacy of faith, hope and service Grandma left her family and others whose lives she touched.

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three and a freelance writer specializing in spirituality and family life.



Addendum: For those who wish to honour a mother or grandmother, living or deceased, through a charitable donation, allow me to suggest Save the Mothers, a Canadian Christian organization. It aims to reduce the number of mothers in developing countries (as many as 1 in 16) who die of complications from pregnancy or childbirth. To learn more about its initiatives, go online to www.savethemothers.org or call 1-866-STM-2350.

Comfort

When one suffers, they seek comfort. When Marisa, my dear wife of almost ten years was first diagnosed with breast cancer, comfort was her first goal which she sought and found. She found comfort in her family. She found comfort in our congregation and most importantly, she found comfort in Jesus and his grace.

When Marisa started chemotherapy she sought a different kind of comfort. Sometimes that comfort was found in prayer. Sometimes that comfort was found in pharmaceutical drugs and sometimes that comfort was found in conversations and transactions with people. At the end of the day, she found comfort in grace. It was her only comfort in life and death.

My oldest child (almost 6 years old) and I go to a bereavement support group that is for both children and adults. The children meet together for 90 minutes a week with a facilitator, while the parents of those children meet together at the same time. We go to talk about Marisa. Ultimately we are seeking comfort in those groups. We all talk about our grief. We talk about the ones that we lost to death. We share our stories.

There is strength to be gained from stories. Stories are healing. Stories are told and written to teach, help and give comfort. During this group, I am looking to others to share their story. I look to others to give me permission to bounce ideas off, to grieve with and to help with finding comfort.

One of the tangible ideas from the stories that I have heard from members in the group is that many people write letters to the loved ones that have died. People do this because it is comforting. There is a one gentleman in the group that keeps a succession of letters that he writes to his late wife.

My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra



I haven't written a letter to Marisa but I have wondered what I would write to her. Maybe I would tell her that the children are doing well but every time I think about that I am reminded that Marisa mentioned several times before she died that she knew that the children would be fine. I think I would feel strange writing 'I love you' because I know in my heart that she always knew that. I find myself trying to find things that I would say to her. Should I reiterate and tell her that we miss her? She already knew we would miss her a great deal.

I think I would tell her that the cell phone that was lost has been found. When it was lost, Marisa and I thought that our one-year-old took it one day and hid it in a crack somewhere that we wouldn't find for years. It happened to be under the snow and was found by our son when the snow bank melted. When our son found it and brought it to me, I laughed. I laughed because Marisa would have been able to see the humour in that.

It brings me comfort that a meaningless thing such as finding a lost cell phone is something that would be at the top of the list to tell Marisa. It says to me that I have already said all the things that needed to be said.

It also shows that it doesn't matter what I would tell Marisa. I don't believe that Marisa is thinking about us. This is a world that she left for a better world. That brings us comfort. Comfort goes where time cannot go. Marisa is now set free from the power of cancer and that is the most comforting of all.

Mendelt D. Hoekstra is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives in Vineland, ON with his three children.

Possessing the land ...continued from p. 10

the earth and come to dwell among us once more? How can we live together in cities, towns, farms, in the bush, in a country, in a world in a way that is sensitive to the fact that it is God's earth we inhabit?

How can we live with a gentle footprint on the land which the Lord God gave us to tend, possess, inherit?

I think things are not all dismal. I'd like to share some testimonies to "living in the land" that I think are positive:

- Gardeners on hands-and-knees "planting beauty" in Eddy Park, the Post Office yard, or the meditation garden at the Old Church.
- A not-so-young couple walking down the highway arm-in-arm, bundled up in winter clothing. No slogans on their backs but a testimonial aura surrounding them as they live and love in God's world.
- A lady or child being "walked by

her dog" along the dyke with no set goal in mind.

- Coffee time in the backyard without talk, just listening, watching, and smelling spring.
- Congregational singing led by nothing more complicated than a recorder. (Not even a piano!)
- An old man shuffling along in snowshoes, supporting shaky knees with ski poles, hitting "new powder" with time to spot the sparkle.
- A neighbour party in which mosquito-peskinness is defeated by good cheer.
- An old gardener patiently spading his garden ("Them roto-tillers are no good for the soil!"), taking breaks by leaning on his shovel, catching his breath and – perhaps – humming a psalm.
- Children playing bicycle tag, or kick-the-can on a long summer night while old folks sit on lawn chairs and drink their tea.

Some weeks ago, our pastor

quoted king David as saying this: "If you encounter Absalom, be gentle with the young man for my sake." I propose an analogy, a far-from precise or perfect analogy, but an analogy:

"Be gentle with the earth, for the sake of David's greater Son."

Live gently and appreciatively, as resident aliens living in the land your Father gave you.

All praise to the Father,
the Son,
and the Holy Spirit.

Curt Gesch is a retired schoolteacher who loves reading. Asked, "What do you read...?" he replies, "Words, words, words." (Hamlet, Act II, Scene ii, lines 190-191.) Asked what he doesn't read, he replies, "Jan Karon, Blood Meridian, song lyrics by Avril Lavigne."



Food

Eating
my
words

Angela Bick

A potluck of fickle fortunes

Children are acutely aware of equality, especially when it comes to food. If I hand my daughters a snack, each one expects a portion identical to her sister's, down to the last raisin. If other kids are visiting, my three year old will divide the food between everyone with military precision. After her friends leave, however, she goes back to splitting snacks in half.

If I take my cue from North American culture, I'll limit my focus to what goes into only one mouth: mine. It's hard to think of sharing once the neighbours are out of sight. I've *heard* that there are 800 million people who don't have enough food to keep their bodies going today, but it's so difficult to imagine. Therefore, instead of dry data – a story.

The hunger banquet

Once there was a church, and the church had a dinner. The church sent out emails and hung up posters, inviting anyone and everyone to join them for a meal. There was an encouraging response: fifty people reserved tickets and went forth to be fed. Well, it didn't quite work out that way. At least, not for everyone.

You see, once they arrived, only ten people were given what you might expect at a church dinner: roast beef, roast potatoes, peas and carrots and then banana cream pie and a choice of tea or coffee. Thirty people – the majority – received a dish of okra (a pod vegetable) and meat pieces served with juice and fruit for dessert. The remaining ten people didn't get much of anything at all: just rice, which they had to fetch themselves and eat without utensils. No waiters hovered by their elbows, ready to fill an empty glass. In fact, if these poor souls wanted anything to drink, they had to search through the church's hallways to find water. Even worse, the water left out for them was dirty.

Tickets for the dinner didn't cost anything, but not all the tickets were identical. It was an attempt to absorb some of those statistics on world hunger. The different servings illustrated global food distribution, and any self-respecting toddler would have been outraged by the disparity.

The ten randomly chosen roast-beef eaters represented the appetite of the world's richest people (which includes Canada and the United States). The thirty people eating okra represented those with a sustainable lifestyle in terms of diet. The final ten, who ate nothing but rice and unclean water, represented the twenty percent who do not get enough sustenance each day to maintain health.

Much depends on dinner

Cindy Verbeek of Houston, British Columbia organized the meal. She says that the event was an eye-opener for its participants. For one thing, many of the people who ate okra were surprised to discover they liked it. It was a good reminder that modest fare can be filling as well as tasty.

The disproportionate food was a lesson in itself, of course, but the participants' behavior illustrated further truths. Some of the well-nourished guests started sharing their food with hungry neighbours. On the other hand, a few people chosen to represent the world's poor were wealthy in real life, and they were unable to stay in character for the night. Two of them ended up bidding against each other for some roast beef, which eventually sold for \$80.

The proceeds, along with a free-will offering that collected over \$4000, went to a family in Uganda. Heartened by this success, Verbeek organized a second dinner the following year. For the most part, she says, participants are able to remain light-hearted despite the dinner's weighty implications. Most people accept their temporary fortunes with good grace. The second year, however, several who had been in the bottom twenty percent the year before were – by chance – given rice and water again. The second time, according to Verbeek, the ill-fortune seemed a little harder to laugh off.

After hearing about Houston's

"World at the Table Dinner," churches in Vernon and Victoria, B.C., held similar events. These dinners are not meant to make guests feel guilty if what they regularly eat is closer to roast beef than rice. Rather, it's a way to demonstrate that portions around the globe are not equal. It's a chance to talk about that disparity. And it's a chance to say "thank-you" a little more fervently for the meals we have at home.

The other day, I was reminded that we should feel blessed, not remorseful, for eating well. Just before lunch, I ended a short prayer with "and thank-you God for this food. Amen." Without missing a beat, my daughter shot back: "God says 'You're welcome!'"

Chicken Chili with Black Beans,
Zucchini and Corn

In a large soup pot, combine the following:

3 Tbsp. olive oil

2 onions (diced)

3 garlic cloves (diced)

Sauté over low heat until golden.

2 ½ Tbsp. chili powder

2 tsp. ground cumin

1 tsp. oregano

1 tsp. basil

½ tsp. cayenne

Add spices and stir for 1-2 minutes to toast the flavour.

2 cups chicken broth

2 cans of diced tomatoes (juice included)

1 bottle of amber beer

1 tsp. sugar

1 bay leaf

Bring the above ingredients to a boil, and then reduce the heat to low and simmer, partially covered, for 40 minutes. Discard bay leaf.

Return broth to a boil and add the following:

1 Tbsp. yellow cornmeal

2 medium zucchini (diced)

2 cups cooked chicken pieces

1 can of black beans (drained and rinsed)

2 cups of whole kernel corn

After reaching a boil, reduce the heat once again and allow the chili to simmer for 15 minutes. Serves 6-8.

This one-pot meal is perfect for a pot-luck or the crock-pot. It's something you might find the middle group eating, as sustainable recipes typically focus on whole grains, beans, legumes and vegetables. This recipe was given to me by the chaplain's wife at Geneva Fellowship in Kingston, Ontario. It was a popular meal with hungry university students.

Angela Reitsma Bick lives in Barrie, Ontario. Send your interesting stories or recipes to: al_angbick@hotmail.com.



Margaret and her grandson Immanuel checking the Ugali – a Ugandan meal.

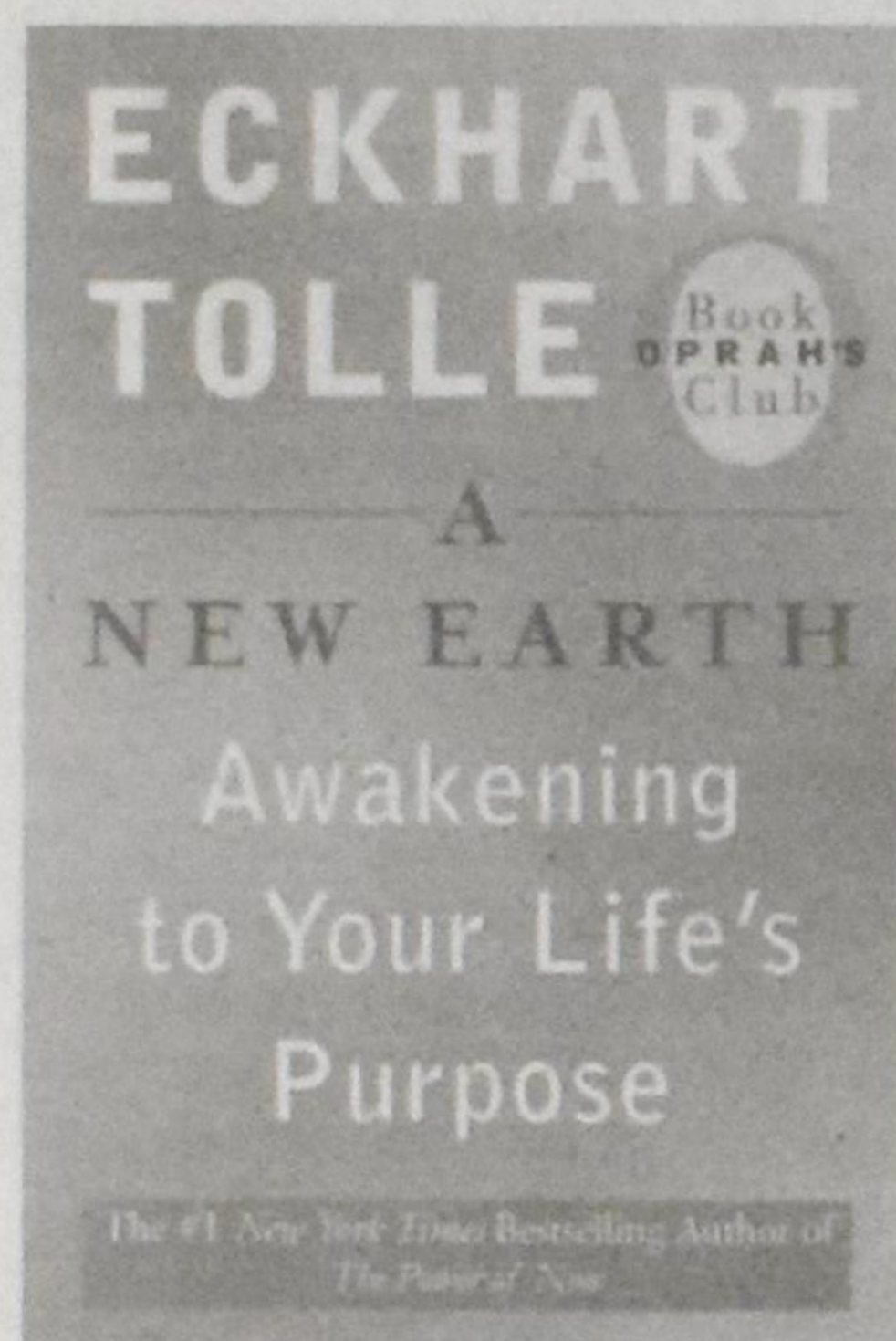


Husband shares his typically North American meal with his hungry wife.

To host your own Unlucky Potluck, see CRWRC's "World at the Table" at www.crcna.org/pages/crwrc_youthresources.cfm, or Oxfam America's Hunger Banquet Site at www.oxfamamerica.org/whatyoucando/act_now/fast/skip_meal. Oxfam also offers a 10-minute slide show to accompany the meal.

Review

The old error of 'A New Earth'



The Oprah-Tolle juggernaut is deeply unbiblical.

Peter Jones

Escondido, Calif. — When Oprah Winfrey declared a few weeks ago that “this is the most exciting thing I’ve ever done,” she wasn’t referring to a new charitable project, her endorsement of Barack Obama, or even her new reality TV show.

She was referring to an unprecedented, 10-week Web broadcast to discuss spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle’s latest bestsell-



ing book, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*. Millions have joined this “webinar,” which concludes May 5.

It’s not hard to see why. It appeals to many disaffected believers, because it claims to liberate us from old, ideological, “I am right; you are wrong” religious beliefs. It offers a new spirituality that supposedly lies at the hidden center of all religions.

It has thus generated great confusion, and a serious backlash among those who see in the Tolle-Oprah juggernaut a pernicious teaching. “The Church of Oprah Exposed” video clip on YouTube has been viewed more than 6 million times.

The confusion derives from the fact that Mr. Tolle’s book is not, like *The Secret*, just another glitzy, profit-driven work of self-help literature. It comes across as an earnest attempt to meet our deepest spiritual needs. Who doesn’t want to experience freedom from anger, depression, resentment, bad habits, and emotional pain?

Indeed, a new earth — a new

life — has been the fervent hope of all who have experienced sin, sickness, and suffering.

Apparent similarities

The Bible and *A New Earth* at first seem very similar, because Tolle’s teachings are often presented in a quasi-Christian framework and affirmed by Oprah as consonant with Christianity.

Tolle’s book cites the Bible about 20 times, without the reader feeling that texts have been wrenched out of their context. It describes our situation of dysfunction and anxiety, of man’s inhumanity to man, and our selfishness. It identifies inauthentic attempts to gain meaning through physical possessions or manipulative relationships. It finds no worth in secular humanism and the consumer society. And it encourages a spirit of forgiveness, citing the words of Jesus on the cross.

There are also parallels with the benefits associated with Christian conversion — phrases such as “new birth,” “joy and peace,” and “grace” are sprinkled throughout the text.

But here is where the similarities end.

On the issue of the nature of God and humanity, and the way of salvation, the apparent agreements give way to fundamental contradictions.

At bottom, one approach is rooted in God’s grace. The other is rooted in man’s vanity.

For Tolle, echoing the teachings of the ancient Gnostics, the chief error is ignorance of our true self. This leads to the rise of “egoic mind patterns,” a false consciousness that causes distress. This ego also mistakenly sees as real the “forms” and “content” of everyday life and the distinctions we see therein: right and wrong, creature and Creator.

The spiritual truth, according to Tolle, is that much of what the ego calls reality is merely — as the Hindus say — maya, illusion. Since the basic human problem is ignorance owing to illusion, the solution is the knowledge of how to attain a transformed state of human consciousness.

True consciousness, and thus salvation, involves what Tolle calls “presence.” We attain knowledge of “presence” by becoming aware of the “inner body,” actively eliminating distinction making thought, conscience, and all forms of physi-

cal reality. By doing this, we can’t overcome disease or suffering, which he advises us to accept, but we can see that we are an integral part of the world of “true being,” not a separate “ego.”

For Tolle, “knowing self and knowing God become one and the same.” The millions who’ve turned to Tolle might naturally conclude: I am the “I Am.” Sound familiar? It should. According to the Bible, such “knowledge” springs from the oldest error of all: man’s desire to be “as gods.”

The Bible teaches that humanly conceived “enlightenment” is actually idolatry, the worship of the human self, a creature, as the equivalent of — or in place of — God, the only Creator. Such idolatry is moral rebellion against “our Father.”

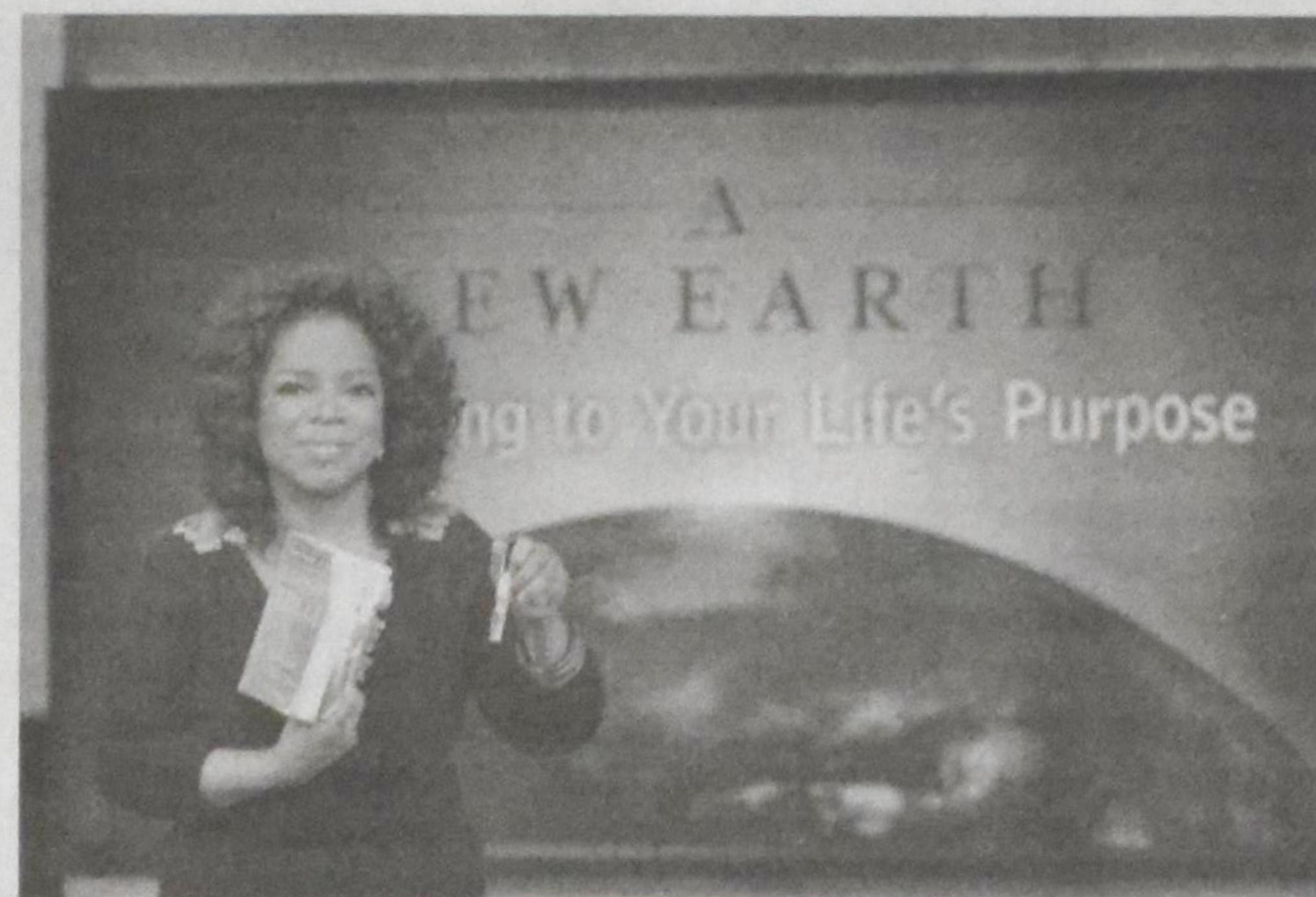
The Bible declares that the basic problem is not ignorance, but sin. Thus the solution is not self-realization through esoteric knowledge, but the grace that flows from the depths of God’s love. As we receive God’s gift of salvation by believing in Jesus Christ, we become, not gods, but “new creatures,” working for and awaiting the Creator’s new heaven and earth.

There is a further source of confusion. Though sounding very open, humble, and inclusive, Tolle’s teachings implicitly reject this biblical truth. He declares that “all religions are equally true and equally false.” But notice: While he and Oprah dismiss religious teaching that claims to be the only way and the only truth, the unstated, but logically inescapable corollary is that theirs is the only way!

On the webcast, a woman asked Oprah how she reconciles Christianity and *A New Earth*. The Baptist-raised Oprah said she could because she had opened her mind to Tolle’s way of thinking and, earlier in life, freed herself from church rules and doctrine. In so doing, though, Oprah — and her millions of followers — are accepting the rules and doctrines of another system, Tolle’s Gnostic view of truth that Jesus’ earliest followers warned against. No wonder so many Christians are confused.

A choice of ultimate importance

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ally creates an occasion of genuine clarity. We face a choice of ultimate importance. We can stand with “the truth” of Tolle-Oprah and a long tradition of mystics who suggest that man is God and that “God” is merely a human creation. Or we can stand with Jesus Christ, who proved that he was “the way, the truth, and the life,” and affirm that God is God, and man is God’s creation.

As contemporary humanity seeks to create a global community, some sort of “new earth,”

the age-old challenge that Joshua issued to Israel is placed before us with added urgency: “Choose this day whom ye will serve”: the gods or God, because, in the global community, as Bob Dylan rightly observed, “you’re gonna have to serve somebody.”

Peter Jones, director of truthX-change, is a professor at Westminster Seminary. He is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America, and coauthor of Cracking Da Vinci's Code.

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Mildred Budge

Bumbledebum

Daphne Simpkins

"Come this way, Miss Budge," Cindi said firmly. "I'll give you a Gertrude."

Mildred smiled regretfully as she lowered herself at the sink opposite from the real Gertrude whose way of washing hair was a glorious highpoint of relaxation at the beauty salon.

"Give me your glasses and your purse. Lean back and relax," Cindi commanded. "Here comes the menthol," Cindi announced, pressing the ointment hard on Mildred's head and then rubbing it efficiently through Mildred's hair.

The real Gertrude gently patted the mentholated oil on one's temples. Then, her skilled hands roamed slowly around Mildred's head in the tempo of their shared senior age finding places of tension on her scalp that she erased with her fingertips.

Cindi sprayed Miss B's head with a hot squirt of water, and then she attacked Mildred's head with a sea of suds and the ferocity of a woman with a job to do, like washing the dog. Mildred's legs shot up in self-defense.

Miss Budge squeezed her eyes shut and prayed that Jesus would save her – and that she would not say anything wrong and mess up this relationship, because in spite of the intensity of the headwashing and the youthful vanity revealed by Cindi when she wrongly claimed she could imitate the real Gertrude, Cindi knew how to cut hair. The young woman wasn't Miss Budge's former hairdresser – her beloved Michael who had deserted Miss Budge and his other faithful clients for a movie star who had stolen him away while on location – but, after an extended period of mourning (for one loves one's hairdresser) and some disastrous encounters with alien creatures and their scissors, Miss Budge had finally found Cindi and wanted to keep her.

The water was slammed off, the back of the chair pressed upwards, and Miss Budge was levered up, little drips of water running down her back. Cindi headed off toward her beauty station, capably carrying Miss Budge's purse and eye glasses. Miss Budge followed the color of Cindi's red beads which she had taken note of upon entering the shop for she planned to pay the girl a compliment should they reach an awkward lull in their conversation. It had happened before.

Cindi whipped the black plastic cape like a bullfighter dramatically around Miss Budge as she sat down. "How was My Gertrude?" Cindi asked.

As more water streamed down her back, Miss Budge replied diplomatically, "My hair feels very clean."

"Do you notice anything about the color of your hair, Miss Budge?" Cindi pointed toward the mirror.

Without her glasses, Miss Budge could barely see the color of her hair in the mirror; but, her brown hair did appear to have a new

blond glow, a kind of shimmering golden sheen.

"I put some Bumbledebum on your head," Cindi boasted, finding her comb and beginning to part sections of Miss Budge's hair. "Bumbledebum will wash out. But I thought – why not? Why not be a blonde and see?"

Mildred gulped, as if her ears had just been pierced without her permission, fought the urge to reach for her glasses and see what her preacher was going to see, but didn't because Cindi was already snipping her hair. Then, she used the hair blowing machine which caused Miss Mildred's hair to grow bigger and bigger.

"I also sprayed on some Liquid Puff," Cindi boasted.

"Liquid Puff and Bumbededum." Mildred repeated, as the young woman's arms rotated above her. Miss Budge admired the firmness of the young woman's upper arms. Those had been good days in her own youth when Mildred's arms did not reveal the motion of the wind. Miss Budge almost said something then – almost said, "Enjoy your arms. They don't stay like that forever."

"Don't you worry, Hon. The blond rinse just coats the silver with gold. It washes right out."

"Silver to gold," Mildred replied, as Cindi then used the hot stick to make some little curls here and there. The young girl was lightning-bolt fast. Then Cindi handed Mildred her glasses and pointed toward the mirror.

"What do you think?" Cindi demanded, obviously pleased with the results.

The effect was startling. Conservative, brown-eyed, brown-haired clay-pot-of-a-church lady Mildred Budge looked as if she were lit from within and without, as if the light of the heaven had landed on her. Ringlets of gold-kissed curls created a halo about her head. She loved, loved, loved it.

"Bumbledebum!" Mildred exclaimed. And in that exclamation Miss B. felt her spirit soar, beginning its ascent away from the painful loss of her beloved Michael and her once signature Susan Hayward hairstyle and toward this surprising new bright future which could be best described as *illuminated*.

"They sell it at the front desk," Cindi said, lowering the chair with a hard kick. Like an elevator that settles hard, the chair bumped down to the last notch.

There was a moment of confusion while Cindi waited for Mildred to stand. But that wasn't as easy as it looked, for there was the metal bar that interfered with the placement of one's feet, and there was also the slight spinning motion inside Miss Budge's head from water in her left ear; and if one wasn't careful to hold on when the world was spinning, one might fall, break a hip, and end up in a nursing home where it is easy to get a staph infection and then die. Miss Budge



took her time.

Cindi cracked her knuckles nervously, and then finally handed Miss Mildred her purse. Mildred extracted the five-dollar bill that Fran had strongly advised her to use as a tip because "Millie, when we get a little older, we need to over-tip the next generation. They need the money, and we need their good will and help."

The next customer was waved over before she had finished putting her wallet away, and Mildred awkwardly made her way to the receptionist's desk to pay her bill where she belatedly realized that she needed her wallet once more. Fumbling, Miss Budge mumbled into her purse, "Bumbedebum, please."

The receptionist didn't hear her.

When Miss Budge finally attracted the clerk's attention, Miss Budge used the valuable opportunity to schedule her next appointment. The appointment card held dearly in her hand, Miss Budge caught a glimpse of the real Gertrude. She thought of how the other older woman had missed out on her tip today from Mildred because Cindi had washed Mildred's hair herself. That must happen often throughout the day. For the real Gertrude worked at the pace in which Mildred lived and the younger generation rushed, pushing the customers through the beauty cycle. That speed probably cost Gertrude the share of tips she depended upon to live.

Miss Budge walked slowly back to the hair washing room and discreetly put the tip she had reserved for the real Gertrude in the other older woman's small tip box affixed to the sink.

Gertrude looked tired. Her hands needed lotion, too. Miss Budge wanted to pat Gertrude's dried out hand, but she whispered an explanation for the unearned tip, "I got a Gertrude today, though not from you."

"Praise the Lord!" Gertrude said.

"Praise the Lord," Mildred Budge affirmed automatically.

Feeling that she had reestablished an order that had gone askew, Mildred drew herself up and turned to finally leave, only to see Cindi with her red beads watching Miss Budge, her young eyes solemnly recording what must have appeared to be an unfairly given tip to the Gertrude who had not provided the headwashing. Mildred moaned

inside. This was exactly the kind of thing that Fran had warned Mildred not to do if she wanted to keep Cindi happy, because sometimes a younger hairdresser thinks an older client is too much trouble and will cut her loose.

Miss Budge stopped prayerfully in her tracks. The weight of the future was heavy upon her, the various chasms that separated so many people bigger than any cash tip one can offer to cover the differences. She thought of

how hard the young pushed toward their futures and how much energy it must take to maintain the self-reliant position of "I can do everything faster and better than you."

Miss Budge remembered how it was to feel that way and how you had to learn throughout a saved lifetime that Jesus wants to help you live at the speed of grace every step of the way, and you have to accept that gift, need to discipline yourself to submit to the pace of a Shepherd who never fails to lead a willing sheep.

How could she explain that to Cindi, a young girl with taut arms and who could manufacture the speed of lightning? Miss Budge didn't think she could explain it all, but decided that she could detour back by Cindi's station and, at least, compliment her pretty red beads. That was Miss Budge's intention, but when she crossed the room and opened her mouth different words spilled out: "Jesus loves you, and I do too."

Cindi blinked rapidly. Miss Budge understood that Cindi didn't know what to say. The young girl could offer herself as a substitute for the older Gertrude, but Cindi didn't know the One who had given himself as a substitute for them all. Miss Budge hoped in time that she would be able to tell Cindi more about Jesus – it was her mission in life to talk about Jesus' gift of himself for people who needed the cleansing power of his blood. But until Cindi could hear her, Miss Budge counted on expressions of good will to pave the way toward that moment and which for her were true and heartfelt.

"Your beads are very pretty, too," Mildred said. Then, in a moment of inspiration that she hoped would be a gift of illumination not unlike the surprise of Bumbledebum, she advised the younger woman, "Enjoy your arms, my dear. Youth fleets."

"Youthfleets," Cindi repeated curiously, her young hand reaching to touch her pretty red beads.

"Bumbledebum," Miss Budge replied, patting her pretty golden highlights.

The two generations of women exchanged confused glances in the mirror, and then in the spirit of good will that abounds like hair spray in the air of a beauty salon, they both smiled and promised in a surprising moment of unison: "See you next time."

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Classifieds

Birth		Anniversaries	
<p>With thanksgiving, we thank God for the safe arrival of a daughter</p> <p>Hailey Rebecca</p> <p>8 lb & 12 oz.</p> <p>daughter for Mark & Sara Hanemaayer grandchild for the first time of Doug & Pat Ransom and 6th grandchild for Bert & Anges Hanemaayer 77th great-grandchild for Oma Hanemaayer</p> <p>Correspondence: 107 Hudson Cres Bradford ON L3Z 2Y7</p>		<p>1958 May 2008</p> <p><i>I will sing of the loving kindness of the Lord forever; To all generations I will make known Thy faithfulness with my mouth.</i> Psalm 89:1</p> <p>Thankful for God's faithfulness throughout the years, we rejoice in celebrating the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents</p>  <p>GEORGE AND CONNIE (Mol) LUYT</p> <p>368 Wilson Rd RR 4, Stirling ON K0K 3E0</p> <p>celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary on May 2nd.</p> <p>Congratulations from your children Perry & Ilka, Suzette & Tim Vos, Deborah & Bill Tomlinson, Len & Denise and your 6 grandchildren.</p> <p>We thank God for you.</p>	
<p>Birthday</p> <p><i>Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not grow faint.</i> Isaiah 40:31</p> <p>By God's grace on May 19th, 2008 our Mom and Oma</p> <p>Margaret (Gery) Flack</p> <p>will celebrate her 75th birthday</p> <p>We invite you to celebrate with us at an Open House Friday May 23rd, 2008 From 7 - 9 p.m. Holland Marsh Christian Reformed Church Best Wishes only</p> <p>With love from your children: George & Lynn Flack Irene & Harry deGeus Pat & Rob White JoAnn & AJ Kight Ron & Deb Flack And all 12 grandchildren</p> <p>Home address: 57 Valleyview Cres. Bradford ON L3Z 1S8</p>		<p>With gratefulness to God, we are happy to announce the 55th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents,</p> <p>JOHN AND RITA PRINZEN on May 9, 2008.</p> <p><i>As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.</i> Joshua 24:15</p> <p>Bert & Helen Prinzen John, Brian</p> <p>Bill & Grace Hoogland Karen & Dave - Kendall Isaac & Kaitlin Derek</p> <p>Archer Prinzen †</p> <p>New address: 3758 St. James Ave Niagara Falls ON L2J 2P9</p>	
<p>Anniversary</p> <p>GARY AND JANNIE PRINSEN</p> <p>1958 - May 17 - 2008 St. Catharines, Ontario</p> <p>With thanksgiving to God we hope to celebrate our 50th Wedding Anniversary.</p> <p>Open House May 24, 2008 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. Beacon Christian School 300 Scott Street St. Catharines, Ontario</p> <p>Brian & Denise Brendan, Drew</p> <p>Wendy & Wab Hoekstra Janneke, Marijke, Jan, Mark</p> <p>Cynthia & Pete van der Werf Bethany, Stephen, David, Rebecca, Rachael</p> <p>Jim & Joanne James, Darren, Jillian</p> <p>Wayne</p> <p>Best wishes only</p> <p>164 Dalhousie Ave St. Catharines ON L2N 4X7</p>		<p>RAY AND WILLY HOITING (nee Storteboom) on May 24, 2008 DV.</p> <p>Linda & Tony Jeronimus - Jonathan, Joshua, Timothy, Tara Coby Hoiting</p> <p>Brian & Veronica Hoiting - Raymond, Daniel, Nolan, Aaron, Connor Brenda & Ed Selke - Stephen, David, Rachel Richard & Carla Hoiting - Jordan, Nicholas, Vashti, Nathaniel, Jessica Liz & Colin Elkin - Rayissa, Morgan, Kamryn, Tristan</p> <p>We invite family & friends to celebrate with us at an Open House on May 24, 2008 between 2-4 p.m. at the John Knox Christian School, 795 Hwy 8 in Fruitland, Ontario.</p> <p>Home address: 37 Glenhollow Dr, Stoney Creek ON L8J 3R8</p>	
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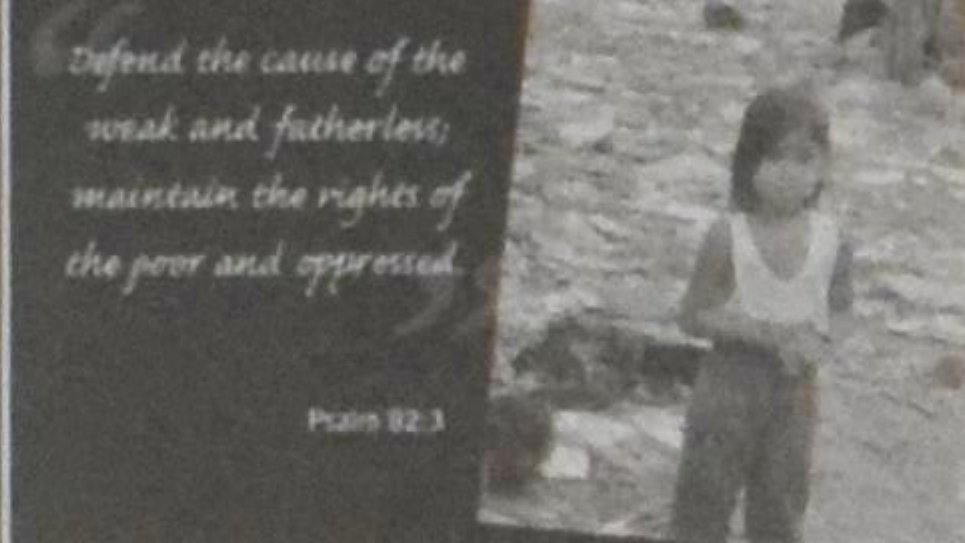
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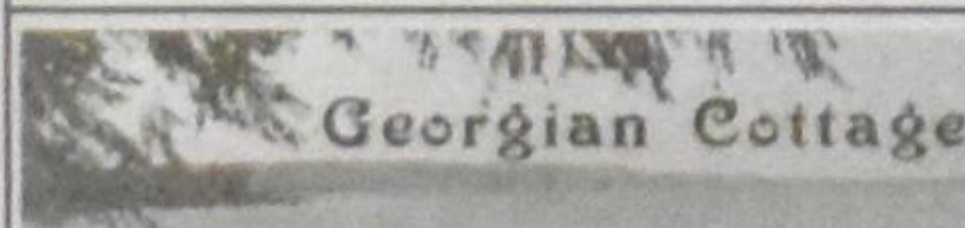
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Where: **Redeemer University College, Ancaster, ON**

To register contact: Rev. Andrew Beunk

ph. (905) 643-4340; abeunk@gmail.com

More info.: www.calvinseminary.edu/continuingEd

Cost: \$60 conf. & Mon. lunch; \$100 conf., lodging, meals

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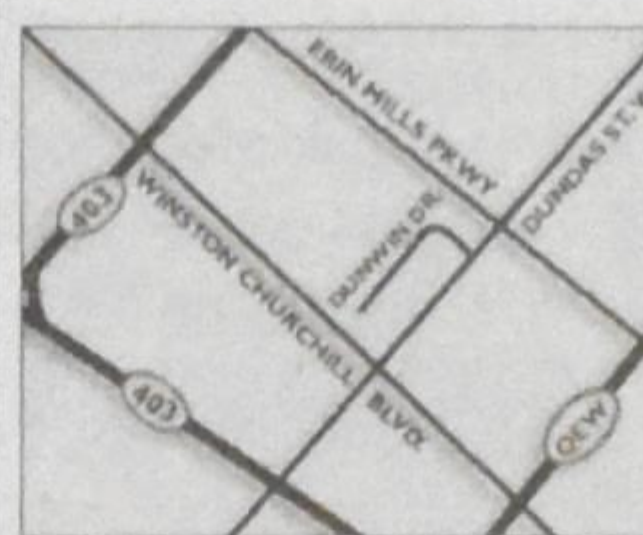


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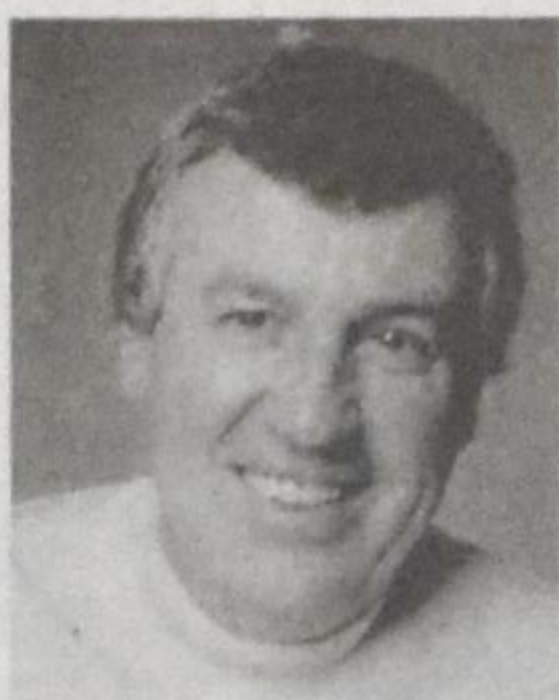
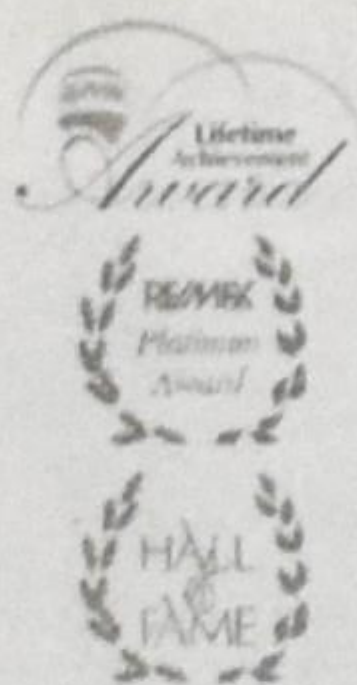
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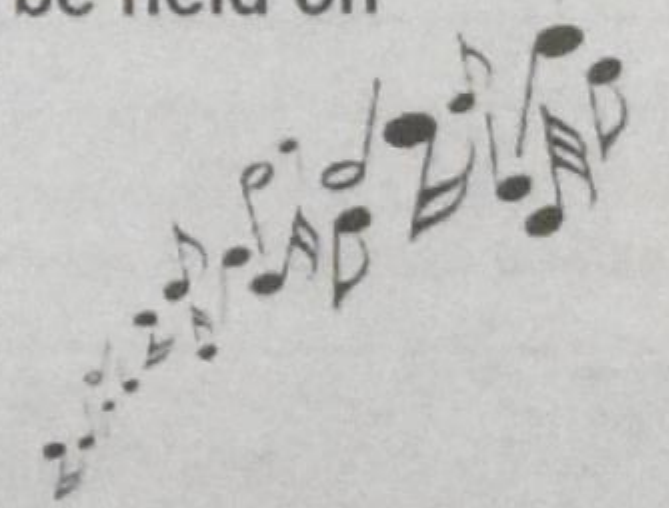
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - 2008

- May 10** Institute for Christian Studies 40th anniversary dinner and silent auction. **Toronto**. For tickets see www.icscanada.edu/40thanniversary.
- May 14** Reception for Rev. Graham Morbey as he concludes his 28 yrs as chaplain to Wilfred Laurier University & University of **Waterloo**. 4:30-6:30 pm. For more information: John Mohle 519-343-2456 x21
- May 16** Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring Alison Clark (Music Director, St. Mark's Anglican Church, **Brantford**) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, Brantford, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)
- May 23** Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring James Noakes (Music Director at St. Paul's Cathedral, London) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, Brantford, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)
- May 23, 25** Bethel CRC, **Dunnville** 50th anniversary. Celebration Dinner to be held on Friday, May 23, and a special service on Sunday, May 25. For more information contact the church at BethelCRC@mountaincable.net or see ad this issue.
- May 24** Liberation choir spring interlude concerts 7:30 pm. at Crosspoint CRC, **Brampton**. See ad this issue.
- May 24, 25** **Chatham** Christian Schools 50th anniversary celebration. Open house 1-4 and evening program. Sunday worship. More information to follow in the April 14 issue or visit www.chathamchristian.ca
- May 25** Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Herman Praamsma will be preaching.
- May 30** Liberation choir spring interlude concerts 7:30 pm. at Mountainview CRC, **Grimsby**. See ad this issue.
- May 30** Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring Dr. Christiaan Teeuwsen (Music Director at MacNab St. Presbyterian Church, Hamilton) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)
- May 31, June 7, June 8** Calvary CRC, **Ottawa**, 50th anniversary events and worship. Join us in celebrating at events on May 31, June 7 (by reservation) and the morning worship service at 10 am on June 8. More information at www.calvarycra.ca or contact Linda at 613-821-1911 or lindamallette@hotmail.com
- June 2,3** Calvin Theological Seminary invites you to "Retreat and Equip". More info at www.calvinseminary.edu/continuingEd or phone Andrew Beunk at 905-643-4340. See ad this issue.
- June 2 -5** Milk & Honey summer festival at Redeemer University College. For more information or to register, call 905.648.2139 ext.4521 or go to www.redeemer.ca under News & Events
- June 6 & 7** The 50th anniversary of **Wellandport** Christian School Reunion Celebration. See ad.
- June 11** Hollandse Dag, 10 am, at the **Moorefield** community centre. For more information contact Hilbert Rumph at 519-638-2053 or see ad in this issue.
- June 18** Hollandse Dag 10:00 Am at First Christian Church, 310 Kingscourt Ave. **Kingston**. Spreker: Rev. Carl D. Tuyl For info call (613) 546-5615
- June 21, 22** All Nations CRC anniversary celebrations. **Halifax**, NS The celebration begins 6 p.m. June 21 with a traditional All Nations Potluck, followed by a variety show. On Sunday we will have a special worship service at 10 a.m., which will be followed by a picnic. We would love to see past members and old friends again - email info@allnationscra.org or call 902-429-7136. See ad this issue.



WELLANDPORT CHRISTIAN SCHOOL 50th Anniversary 1958-2008

The 50th anniversary of Wellandport Christian School is a time to reflect, with gratitude, God's faithfulness to the WCS community.

Plan to attend.

Friday, June 6, 2008

Celebration Program
Riverside CRC, Wellandport
7:30 pm

Saturday, June 7, 2008

Reunion at the School
1:00 to 5:00 pm



Grade 8 class 1975

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CALVARY CRC OF OTTAWA 50TH ANNIVERSARY

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"To hold forth the word of life" - Phil. 2:16

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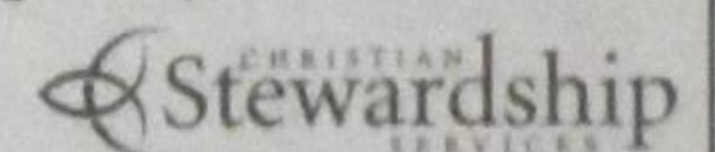


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News

'Small wind' power plants are blowing strong

Climate concerns, rising utility costs, better technology, and new laws are making home units more attractive.

Mark Clayton

DOVER, Mass.— On a recent sunny afternoon Bob Loebelenz pauses to gaze 72 feet into the air at the spinning blades of his wind turbine, a small “clean, free electricity” smile creasing the corners of his mouth.

While giant wind turbines that supply power to utilities sprout along ridgelines across the United States, far smaller residential wind generators, like the one Mr. Loebelenz erected in 2003 to power his suburban Boston home, are still unusual in densely populated places.

That may be changing. Across the country signs are growing that “small wind” (a category that includes wind generators geared to supply a single home) is catching on in suburban and even urban settings.

“My phone has been ringing off the hook,” says Mark Durrenberger, president and founder of New England Breeze, a Hudson, Mass., wind and solar power installer.

Improved generator technology, more financial incentives, rising electric rates, and energy-security concerns have opened the way for small-wind power to bloom in unlikely places.

“Small wind really seems to

be taking off for residential, small business, and farm use,” says Trudy Forsyth, leader of the distributed wind program at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, Colo.

The installed capacity of “on grid” small-wind residential generators has almost tripled, from 1,300 kilowatts in the US in 2006 to 3,000 kilowatts last year, says the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA), a Washington-based trade organization. The number of residential installations rose from 400 to 1,200 units in the same period.

Supplying that tiny but red-hot market are dozens of new companies that have popped up since 2000. Though a half-dozen companies dominate the market, AWEA tracks about 45 US manufacturers. With demand strong overseas, too, the US is the world leader in small-wind power, exporting more than half of what it sells.

“The growth we’re now seeing in small-wind residential in the US is impressive,” says Ron Stimmel, who tracks the small-wind market for AWEA. “Advanced technology and electronics have made these units more reliable, and more states are now offering incentives to build them.”

At least 26 states have tax or productivity incentives or other subsidies to support wind energy, Ms. Forsyth says. But strong growth is happening even without the federal tax incentives enjoyed by solar panels and big utility-scale



PHOTO BY JOANNE CICCARELLO
Bob Loebelenz of Dover, Mass. has generated controversy and admiration for his wind turbine located on his farm. The tower provides most of the electricity for his house and barn.

wind turbines, she notes.

Countervailing breezes are blowing

Long held down by high up-front costs, lack of federal subsidies, and neighborhood opposition on aesthetic and noise grounds, small residential wind-power use continues to grow far more slowly than solar photovoltaic “panels,” experts say. Some also oppose small-wind units claiming they are “bird Cuisinarts,” Loebelenz says, though he has never found dead birds by his unit.

Another major hurdle is zoning laws. While few states or the 25,000 local zoning authorities have laws specific to wind power, that’s changing, Mr. Stimmel says. Five states — Wisconsin, California, Michigan, Vermont, and New York — now prohibit local zoning laws from blanket small-wind prohibitions.

“Zoning is always an issue, it’s something we understand now and we go in prepared to show the benefits,” says Don Mosher, president of Southern New England Wind Power, based in Portsmouth, R.I.

Even so, zoning battles over wind power are increasing. Loebelenz had to hire a lawyer. Even then, he might have lost the fight had not an octogenarian neighbor, Beverly Ryburn, not come to his rescue by rallying others to help.

Pointing to a plaque on his tower that reads: “The Beverly,” Loebelenz notes: “I named my

wind generator after her because, without her, it probably would not have been built.”

Wind power can be expensive. Small wind turbines for homes run in the 2- to 10-kilowatt range. A smaller machine can cost from \$12,000 to \$60,000, installed. A rule of thumb: Turbine systems cost about \$6 to \$8 per watt (1 kilowatt = 1,000 watts), installed.

Loebelenz also has a big solar array on his barn roof next to the wind turbine. On many days, when the wind generator is humming and solar panels are cooking, he’s generating far more energy than he uses, so he sells the overage to the power company.

It’s that link to the power grid that’s been key to small-wind growth. While wind power has long been popular for “off the grid” homes miles from power lines, growth in residential “grid tied” homes lagged until “net metering” laws were passed. Net metering means a utility must buy back extra power.

Better wind technology has helped, too. Lighter magnets in the generators, blades that adjust to wind conditions, and units that wirelessly report how much power they’re making — along with global-warming concerns — are creating a “perfect storm” of interest in suburban, even urban residential wind power.

“Everything we had done historically was off-grid and interna-

tional, but ... about six, seven years ago really, things started percolating,” says Andy Kruse, vice president of Southwest Windpower, the nation’s largest small-wind manufacturer, in Flagstaff, Ariz.

The company’s newest small turbine — the 1.8-kilowatt “Skystream” — is aimed at the residential market. In February, the company said a Skystream would be erected at the Maine home of former President George H.W. Bush.

But Robin Wilson already has a Skystream wind generator atop a 45-foot pole sticking out of her new zero-energy home in San Francisco’s Mission District. Hers may be the first such “urban residential turbine,” though she can’t be quite sure.

Ms. Wilson may have started something because San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom visited her home recently and says he’s forming a group to study the idea of expanding residential wind throughout the city.

“I love the idea of being a zero-energy home and wind is helping me get there,” says Wilson, whose neighbors “just love it” she says. The “scimitar-style” high-tech blades emit little noise, she says, “just a little hum.”

Mark Clayton is a Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor



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